

CPA UK
BRITISH ISLANDS
& MEDITERRANEAN
REGION



CPA BIMR

Election Observation Mission to the Falkland Islands

DECEMBER 2025



FINAL REPORT



"We are deeply grateful for the warm hospitality and genuine openness shown to our international observer team during our time in the Falkland Islands. From the moment we arrived and throughout Election Day, it was clear that the electoral process is transparent, well organised and professionally managed, reflecting a strong democratic tradition and the character and values of the community. We consistently observed the dedication, expertise and commitment of all those involved in administering and delivering the Election. We hope that our final report containing recommendations and observations will support the people of the Falkland Islands in continuing to strengthen their democratic processes."

Alun Davies MS (Wales), Head of Mission

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On Thursday 11 December 2025, the Falkland Islands held their General Election in a calm, transparent and well-administered process. Polling stations were well prepared, staff were trained and election officials acted professionally and impartially. A broad range of special voting arrangements, including postal ballots, proxies and mobile teams, ensured wide participation and upheld international standards.

The Falkland Islands, a UK Overseas Territory with around 3,600 residents, operate under the 2008 Constitution, with executive authority shared between the Governor, Executive Council and Legislative Assembly. Eight independent MLAs are elected to govern by consensus. The Election followed the Assembly's dissolution on 31 October 2025, after a campaign focused on economic diversification, infrastructure investment, renewable energy, housing and public service priorities.

The Election was conducted under the Constitution and the Election Ordinance, supported by related legislation including the Media Trust and Communications Ordinances. Together these provide a solid framework for democratic elections, though some provisions, particularly relating to eligibility and constituency disparities, may benefit from review. MLAs are elected in the Stanley and Camp constituencies through the *block vote* system, unchanged since 1989.

Election administration was widely praised. The Chief Executive acted as Returning Officer, supported by the Registrar General, whose professionalism and institutional knowledge were frequently commended. Voter registration is high, supported by an annual canvass and a travelcredit incentive, though stakeholders highlighted the potential for modernisation and the possible introduction of voter identification. The final register listed 1,590 voters in Stanley and 239 in Camp.

Voting rights are extended to Falkland Islanders aged 18 and over who meet citizenship and residency criteria. A recent Supreme Court ruling clarified constitutional provisions for those holding multiple nationalities. While nominations were inclusive and efficiently administered, eligibility rules remain restrictive and some may not fully align with international standards. Nineteen candidates stood for election, 15 in Stanley and four in Camp, with limited diversity.



The campaign was calm, competitive and substantive, relying on published and mailed manifestos, well attended and widely broadcast hustings and increasing use of social media. Door-to-door outreach was particularly prominent in Camp, though absent in Stanley. Key themes included economic diversification, housing, public services and transparency. While the overall environment respected fundamental freedoms and ensured a level playing field, some candidates exercised self-censorship on at least one sensitive issue. Campaign finance limits were respected, though the absence of donation regulation, including foreign contributions, presents potential transparency risks.

Media coverage by Penguin News, Falklands Radio and Falkland Islands Television was impartial, informative and balanced. Despite a small media ecosystem, reporting ensured that all political viewpoints were fairly represented.

Women remain underrepresented in elected office: three of 19 candidates were women and two were elected. Persons with disabilities face no formal exclusion but encounter practical barriers due to limited accessibility and the absence of assistive technologies. Migrant communities also remain hesitant to stand, suggesting opportunities to strengthen inclusion strategies.

Mobile voting and Election Day polling were assessed as Good or Very Good across all Mission observations. Procedures were followed consistently, secrecy was respected and staff supported elderly and infirm voters with care. Minor delays and one instance of family voting did not affect confidence in the process. Counting was efficient and transparent, with results announced promptly and accepted by all candidates. Turnout was high at 81 percent in Stanley and 90 percent in Camp.

Judicial remedies exist but are rarely invoked. No complaints or petitions were filed for this election and the recent Supreme Court ruling on candidate eligibility constituted the first election related judgment in Falkland Islands history. The availability of legal redress remains an important safeguard of electoral integrity.

Over twelve days, the Mission met a wide range of stakeholders, including candidates, officials, journalists, civil society and members of the public, attended hustings, observed mobile voting across East and West Falkland and visited all four polling stations on Election Day as well as the count and announcement of results.

The Mission expresses its sincere thanks to all those who met with us and openly shared their perspectives.



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INTRODUCTION TO THE MISSION

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association British Islands and Mediterranean Region (CPA BIMR) conducted an international Election Observation Mission to the Falkland Islands General Election on 11 December 2025.

The Mission was composed of seven observers, including three Commonwealth parliamentarians. These observers were:

- Head of Mission: Alun Davies MS (Wales)
- Short-Term Observer: Hon. Akierra Missick (Turks and Caicos Islands)
- Short-Term Observer: Rob Callister MHK (Isle of Man)
- Legal Analyst & Political Analyst: Vasil Vashchanka (Sweden)
- Electoral and Campaign Analyst: Stefan Szwed (Poland)
- CPA BIMR Coordinator: Elinor Souch (UK)
- CPA BIMR Administrator: Magdalene El Beledi (UK)



The CPA BIMR international election observers to the Falkland Islands 2025 General Election

CPA BIMR was invited to facilitate this observation by the Governor, in his capacity as the Head of State's representative in the Falkland Islands. The Mission had wide-spread support, with most candidates engaging with the mission.

The observers were present from 1 to 13 December 2025. The Mission conducted an independent assessment of the Falkland Islands General Election against international legal standards, commitments and obligations, as well as domestic laws. This is the first time CPA BIMR has observed a general election in the Falkland Islands.



The mission arrived in the Falkland Islands 10 days before Election Day and met a wide range of stakeholders in the General Election. These included candidates, the elections office, election officials, members of the judiciary, media outlets and civil society groups.

Advance voting, known as mobile voting, was observed in four areas on the day before and on Election Day. On Election Day itself the Mission observed voting across East and West Falkland, in all 4 polling stations and the counting centre.

The Mission is independent in its composition, findings and conclusions, adhering to the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation and Code of Conduct for International Election Observers signed at the United Nations in 2005.

POLITICAL BACKGROUND

The Falkland Islands are a self-governing UK Overseas Territory in the South Atlantic, covering approximately 4,700 square miles (12,173 square kilometres) and home to around 3,600 residents. Their status as an Overseas Territory, combined with geographic remoteness and a small, unevenly distributed population, has shaped a distinctive system of governance and electoral arrangements grounded in self-determination and a close constitutional relationship with the United Kingdom.

Under the 2008 Constitution, the Falkland Islands Government (FIG) comprises three branches: the Executive Council, the Legislative Assembly and the Judiciary. The UK-appointed Governor, who serves as the Crown's representative and was most recently sworn in in July 2025, retains reserved authority over defence, external affairs, internal security and key public appointments, including those of the Financial Secretary, Attorney General and the Chief Executive.¹ The latter is the head of the civil service and is responsible for overseeing the implementation of government policy and the day-to-day administration of government. Since April 2025, this role has been held by a Falkland Islander for the first time.

The Legislative Assembly comprises eight Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) and operates without political parties. It is responsible for legislating on matters necessary for "peace, order and good government" of the Islands, including budgets, infrastructure, education, health and economic policy. MLAs work collaboratively, sharing responsibilities through committees and generally making decisions by consensus. While any MLA may propose legislation, financial and taxation bills require the Governor's prior consent. Legislation is passed by a simple majority and becomes law upon receiving the Governor's assent.

The Executive Council serves as the FIG's principal policy-making body. Chaired by the Governor, it comprises three MLAs elected annually by their peers, who hold exclusive voting rights. The Chief

¹ The current Governor of the Falkland Islands was appointed in May 2025 and officially sworn in on 29 July 2025 at the Court and Council Chambers in Stanley.



Executive and Financial Secretary sit as *ex officio* members, while the Attorney General and the Commander of British Forces attend as required. The Council's role is to advise the Governor on policy strategy, legislative matters and significant administrative decisions.

Acting on the advice of the Executive Council, the Governor formally dissolved the Legislative Assembly on 31 October, bringing the four-year term to an early close. The election timetable, announced on 7 August, provided that the Proclamation and Notice of Election would be issued on the same day as dissolution, with polling scheduled for 11 December. Throughout the interim period, between dissolution and the inaugural sitting of the newly elected Assembly, the incumbent government continued to operate in a caretaker capacity.

Political debates in the Falkland Islands in the runup to the Election centred on economic development priorities set out in a long-term strategy adopted in 2025 following public consultation, aimed at strengthening economic resilience and diversification. Policy focuses included tourism, hydrocarbons, renewable energy and emerging technologies, alongside investment in transport links, telecommunications, housing and workforce skills. Key developments discussed included the planned replacement of the ageing Falkland Islands Interim Port and Storage System (FIPASS) facility through the Stanley Port project; the Sea Lion hydrocarbon field, with the final investment decision announced on the eve of the Election; implementation of the Energy Strategy approved in March 2025, which sets an ambition to transition towards fully renewable electricity generation by 2045; and infrastructure funding within the 2025/26 budget, which introduced borrowing to finance capital projects. The licensing of satellite broadband services in November 2025 introduced competition into the telecommunications sector. The continuing sovereignty dispute with Argentina was cited by stakeholders as an enduring contextual consideration.²

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

A number of international human rights treaties, which include standards for democratic elections have been extended to the Falkland Islands, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).

Elections in the Falkland Islands are regulated primarily by the 2008 Constitution and the 1988 Electoral Ordinance. Other legislative acts are of indirect relevance to the electoral process, such as the 1989 Media Trust Ordinance and the 2017 Communications Ordinance. The Electoral Ordinance

² The Falkland Islands are listed by the United Nations as a Non-Self-Governing Territory, with the UN Special Committee on Decolonization regularly calling for peaceful discussions between the UK and Argentina over sovereignty, while emphasising the importance of respecting the wishes of the Islanders. The UK and Falkland Islands authorities reaffirm the Islanders' right to self-determination under the 2008 Constitution Order. In the 2013 sovereignty referendum, 99.8 percent of voters (1,513 of 1,516 valid votes, with a 92 percent turnout) chose to remain a UK Overseas Territory.



has been amended several times since its adoption, to reflect constitutional changes and evolving electoral practices. The most recent change took place in October 2025 and increased election spending limits.

The legal framework is comprehensive and facilitates the conduct of democratic elections. In particular, the Electoral Ordinance provides detailed regulation of voter registration and candidate nomination, as well as election expenses, campaign prohibitions and different polling arrangements. However, it would benefit from a review in order to better meet future challenges and address the issues identified in this report.

ELECTORAL SYSTEM AND BOUNDARY DELIMITATION

Eight members of the Legislative Assembly are directly elected in two constituencies, defined in the Constitution. The boundaries of both constituencies are determined in accordance with the Electoral Ordinance and the 1989 Elections (Boundaries of Constituencies) Regulations as follows: all those parts of the Islands that lie within the distance of 3.5 miles from the spire of Christ Church Cathedral in Stanley constitute the Stanley constituency and the rest of the Islands are the Camp constituency. These boundaries have not changed since 1989.

The Stanley constituency returns five members of the Legislative Assembly, while Camp elects three. The electoral system, sometimes referred to as “block vote”, gives each voter as many votes as there are seats to be filled in the constituency, therefore voters in Stanley could mark up to five candidates on their ballot, while voters in Camp could mark up to three. There is no ranking of choices and candidates who garner the highest numbers of votes are elected. The electoral system has been the same for more than three decades and is well understood by voters and election officials.

Considerable difference between the number of registered voters in the two constituencies (see section Voter Registration below) leads to a significant disparity in the weight of the individual vote. There are nearly four times as many voters per elected representative in Stanley than in Camp.³ This disparity is among the main arguments put forward by proponents of change to a single electoral constituency. However, the latest (third) referendum on this issue, held in September 2020, did not obtain a sufficient two thirds majority of votes to adopt the proposal.⁴ Many Camp residents maintain that despite the sparsity of the population, the large geographic area, economic importance and distinctive needs of their constituency justify the inequality in representation. At the same time, the

³ The UN Human Rights Committee has interpreted the principle of equal suffrage to mean that “within the framework of each State’s electoral system, the vote of one elector should be equal to the vote of another” (see CCPR General Comment No. 25 (1996), paragraph 21). The Council of Europe’s Venice Commission has recognised that constituency boundaries may also be determined on the basis of geographical criteria and historic boundary lines, which often depend on geography (see Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters, Explanatory Report at paragraph 14).

⁴ The Constitution requires a two-thirds majority in favour of change in each constituency. While nearly 58 percent of voters in Stanley supported a single constituency, only 32 percent voters in Camp did so. Similar proposals were also rejected in 2001 and 2011.



Mission has also heard from Camp voters who do not believe that the current system serves them well.

Recommendation: Options for ensuring equality of the vote should be explored, in keeping with evolving considerations related to effective and equitable representation.

ELECTION ADMINISTRATION

The law requires the Governor to appoint a Returning Officer either for each or to cover both constituencies. If no such appointment is made, the Chief Executive serves as a Returning Officer by default, which has been the case traditionally and also for this election. In turn, the Returning Officer appointed the Attorney General and the Registrar General as Deputy Returning Officers. Presiding officers for polling stations, as well as polling and counting clerks, appointed by the Returning Officer, were drawn primarily from the ranks of civil servants who expressed interest in election duties.

Polling and counting clerks received a briefing from the Registrar General, who also provided them with a written presentation and was available for any inquiries throughout the pre-election period and on Election Day. Assisted by an associate, the Registrar General carried out most of the electoral preparations, including distributing information packages and receipt of candidate nominations, printing of ballots, preparing copies of the electoral register and other documents for conducting the polls, the dispatch and receipt of postal ballots, issuing of proxies, organising mobile teams and publishing information on voting procedures, among other tasks. All stakeholders met by the Mission expressed confidence in and appreciation for the Registrar General's professionalism, impartiality and efficiency.

Retaining this institutional memory of election administration is vital for ensuring that future polls are conducted at the requisite level of professionalism, impartiality and integrity. To this end, putting together a comprehensive resource that would record all steps undertaken in preparation and conduct of an election, such as a manual, would be useful to guide any Returning Officer or other officials who may be new to the role in the future. Part of such a manual could also be used to train polling and counting staff.

Recommendation: Take measures to preserve institutional memory in election administration and ensure the necessary knowledge can be effectively shared with less experienced election officers.



SPECIAL VOTING ARRANGEMENTS

Several additional arrangements provide an opportunity to vote for those who are unable or unwilling to cast their ballot in a polling station on Election Day. Any voter may apply for a postal ballot, until the day before the last day for candidate nominations. By the same deadline, any voter may authorise another eligible voter in their constituency as a proxy to vote on their behalf. A duly authorised proxy may also apply for a postal ballot. After the statutory deadline for proxy applications expires and up until 16:00hr on the third working day before election date, a voter may apply for an emergency proxy, in case of unforeseen intervening circumstances. In total, some 85 voters applied for a postal ballot, mostly in the Camp constituency, while nearly 90 voters authorised proxies, with more than 80 of these in Stanley. Additionally, emergency proxies were issued for 27 voters, all but two of which were in Stanley.

In addition to proxy and postal voting, on the day preceding the election date four mobile teams took ballot boxes to voters in the Camp constituency. On Election Day another mobile team travelled to the prison and health care institutions in Stanley. The routes and schedules of the mobile teams were published and circulated in the media well in advance of Election Day. Voters who received postal ballots but did not return them were given the opportunity to cast them in mobile and stationary polling stations.

The wide range of special voting arrangements facilitated the exercise of the right to vote, showcasing how related international standards are being upheld.⁵ The high turnout observed in this Election is also partially owed to the availability of alternative voting channels. At the same time, there is room for greater facilitation of individual participation in elections, as opposed to delegation of one's civic voice to a proxy. To this end, other arrangements such as additional early voting and/or an emergency postal ballot could be considered, with the aim of reducing proxy voting.

Recommendation: Give consideration to additional voting arrangements facilitating individual participation in elections, in an effort to reduce reliance on proxy voting.

THE RIGHT TO VOTE

Under the Constitution, the right to vote belongs to any person who is at least 18 years of age and has Falkland Islands status, provided they are a citizen of the UK, British Overseas Territories or a British Overseas Citizen and meet the residency requirement in the Falkland Islands. The right to vote is withdrawn from persons certified to be insane or adjudged to be of unsound mind; those serving a sentence of imprisonment for at least 12 months or convicted of an offence related to elections; and those who by virtue of their own act are under any acknowledgement of allegiance, obedience or

⁵ The UN Human Rights Committee has made it clear that "States must take effective measures to ensure that all persons entitled to vote are able to exercise that right" (see CCPR General Comment No. 25 (1996), paragraph 11).



adherence to a foreign Power or State. The latter restriction was recently interpreted by the Supreme Court of the Falkland Islands.

In a landmark judgment, the Supreme Court disagreed with the Attorney General, who sought to disqualify an elected member of the Legislative Assembly due to her registering citizenship of New Zealand, to which she was entitled by birth. Importantly, the Supreme Court emphasised that provisions affecting constitutional rights should be construed narrowly. The Court held that the act of applying for and receiving New Zealand citizenship in this case did not constitute acknowledgement of allegiance, obedience or adherence to a foreign power contemplated in the Constitution.⁶

The Supreme Court was not called upon to examine compatibility of the restriction in question with international human rights law, which sets out the criteria of lawfulness, legitimate aim and proportionality. At a first glance, it would appear that this restriction could potentially be at odds with the ECHR.⁷ In any event, while definitive for the case at hand, the Court's judgment may not suffice to ascertain consequences for some eligible voters holding multiple nationalities and further guidance for voters by the Attorney General could enhance legal certainty.

The Mission had the opportunity to meet several young candidates and attend hustings organised by the Youth Parliament, which has taken a commendable initiative to give young people an opportunity to bring their concerns to the candidates' attention. While lowering the voting age to 16 has not been discussed in the campaign, these initiatives show that there may be space for holding such discussions in the future.⁸

VOTER REGISTRATION

The voter register, maintained by the Registrar General for the Falkland Islands in her capacity as electoral Registration Officer, is compiled on the basis of the annual canvas, which is carried out by way of a paper registration form sent to each household. Eligible voters must show that they meet the residency requirement in the Falkland Islands and any temporary absences fall under permitted exceptions, such as studies or employment.

The completeness of the voter register is very high and only a handful of eligible voters have chosen not to register. Many Mission interlocutors believe that the high rate of voter registration is due in part to the fact that eligibility for a popular government travel benefit scheme is contingent upon voter

⁶ *The Attorney General for the Falkland Islands v. Teslyn Barkman*, Supreme Court of the Falkland Islands, judgement of 12 December 2023.

⁷ In the case of [Tanase v. Moldova](#), the European Court of Human Rights reiterated the need to "individualise" any restrictive measures, to take account of the actual conduct of individuals rather than a perceived threat posed by a group of persons. It held that the law preventing elected MPs with multiple nationalities from taking seats in Parliament was disproportionate and in violation of the ECHR.

⁸ The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) has invited member states to investigate the possibility of lowering the voting age to 16 years in all countries and for all kinds of elections (see Resolution 1826 (2011) "Expansion of democracy by lowering the voting age to 16").



registration. As foreseen in the law, the preliminary list of electors was published in the official Gazette on 1 May. It included 1,518 registered voters in Stanley and 237 in Camp. Since then, before polling day, over 70 additional electors were registered. The final numbers on the voter list were 1,590 for Stanley and 239 for Camp.

Overall, the voter registration process was viewed by Mission stakeholders as satisfactory, but some felt that there is room for modernising the system, such as moving away from paper-based forms. The household-based approach also merits a review, as it leaves registration of eligible voters who are temporarily absent, such as students, at the discretion of present household members. On Election Day, during observation of the mobile polling in institutions, the Mission noted that some care home residents who expected to vote were not on the voter list, presumably because their household members did not include them during the canvass.

Recommendation: Explore possibilities for improving the voter registration system, including by moving to an individual rather than household approach.

The latest population census held in October 2021 recorded a usually resident population of 3,662, including 2,089 Falkland Islander status holders and 331 permanent residence permit holders. If this data has not changed substantially since 2021, it would suggest that the Islands are home to several hundred long-term residents who are not entitled to vote. The issue of representation for the non-voting population was brought up during the campaign at one of the Falklands Radio hustings, with all participating candidates agreeing that they strive to serve all the Islands' residents.

Currently, in order to obtain a ballot, voters do not need to present any ID, but only to state their name and address and confirm that they have not already voted. This system essentially relies on polling staff knowing each voter personally, which may not necessarily be the case now and in the future. Substantial growth of the population since the 1980s, when the Electoral Ordinance was adopted, prompts a question as to whether these rules may need to be revisited. Several Mission stakeholders supported the idea of discussing additional voter identification requirements.

Recommendation: Consider introducing a voter identification requirement at polling stations.

THE RIGHT TO STAND FOR ELECTION

To stand for election to the Legislative Assembly, candidates must be at least 18 years old on polling day and registered to vote, which requires Falkland Islands status. They must also satisfy constitutional qualifications, including residency requirements and UK citizenship.⁹ In addition,

⁹ Members of the UK armed forces are ineligible to stand for office.



candidates must not be subject to any statutory disqualifications. These include being adjudged to be of unsound mind; being an undischarged bankrupt; serving, or having within the previous five years served, a sentence of imprisonment of 12 months or more; being disqualified under any law relating to electoral offences; or having, by their own act, acknowledged allegiance, obedience or adherence to a foreign power or state.¹⁰ The Constitution also disqualifies certain holders of public office and members of the regular armed forces, subject to limited exceptions and any requirement to relinquish such office if elected.

Some of these restrictions may unduly limit the right to stand for election and run counter to international standards for democratic elections. Disqualifying individuals on the basis of mental incapacity, even when court-determined, runs counter to the principles of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities which, while not formally extended to the Falkland Islands, establishes widely recognised standards.¹¹ Similarly, rules concerning allegiance or ties to foreign powers may create legal uncertainty and raise concerns under international norms (see *The Right to Vote*). A more permissive approach would allow otherwise qualified individuals to participate fully in the democratic process, promoting broader political engagement and better safeguarding fundamental human rights.

Recommendation: To advance more fully inclusive elections, candidate eligibility requirements, including disqualification of individuals on the basis of mental incapacity and rules on allegiance to foreign powers, could be reviewed and revised to align with international standards.

CANDIDATE REGISTRATION

The nomination period for the 2025 Falkland Islands General Election opened on 31 October with the publication of the writ and closed at 16:00 on 21 November. Candidates were required to submit nomination papers signed by two registered voters from their constituency, one proposer and one seconder, along with four additional registered electors as supporters, all delivered to the Returning Officer by the deadline. No individual could act as proposer, seconder or supporter for more candidates than the number of available seats (five in Stanley, three in Camp); any excess signatures are disregarded. A £100 deposit was required, refundable to candidates who received at least one-eighth of the votes cast.

¹⁰ In the 2023 Barkman case, the Falkland Islands Supreme Court ruled that Teslyn Siobhan Barkman could retain her Legislative Assembly seat despite applying to register her New Zealand citizenship by descent. The Court found that this did not amount to an “acknowledgement of allegiance, obedience or adherence to a foreign Power or State” under the Falkland Islands Constitution, also indicating that dual nationality with a Commonwealth country does not automatically disqualify someone from holding office.

¹¹ See Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), Articles 12 and 29; CRPD Committee, *Communication No. 4/2011: Zsolt Bujdosó and five others v. Hungary*, CRPD/C/10/D/4/2011 (2013), para. 9.4; and CRPD Committee, *General Comment No. 1 on Article 12: Equal Recognition Before the Law*, UN Doc. CRPD/C/GC/1 (2014), para. 48.



With no political parties, all candidates stood as independents and although joint candidacies are legally permitted, none were submitted; no candidates expressed interest in the development of a political party system in the Falkland Islands. Several first-timer candidates flagged the usefulness of workshops organised by the public administration ahead of the Election. The Supreme Court is responsible for adjudicating eligibility disputes, though none arose during the 2025 nomination period.

Following the close of nominations, the Returning Officer verified all submissions and formally published the list of candidates in the official Gazette on 21 November 2025, accompanied by video confirmation on FITV and announcements via social media. A total of 19 nominations were received, all of which were accepted: 15 candidates stood in Stanley and four in Camp. Six incumbents sought re-election, including five in Stanley and one in Camp.¹² Despite the eligibility restrictions noted above, stakeholders, including candidates met by the Mission, generally described the process as inclusive, efficient and professionally administered, raising no concerns about its conduct, though some noted limited participation from underrepresented groups.

ELECTION CAMPAIGN

Prospective candidates may engage with voters at any time, with the formal campaign period beginning upon nomination for campaign finance reporting purposes; several stakeholders remarked that campaigning started earlier in the Camp constituency. There is no statutory campaign silence period; however, media outlets exercised restraint in coverage and discussion on Election Day. Active campaigning, including the display of posters or other materials, is prohibited inside polling stations and their immediate vicinity.

Campaign regulation in the Falkland Islands is relatively light, with the Electoral Ordinance focused on preventing corruption and ensuring a fair process. It prohibits corrupt practices such as bribery, treating, undue influence and corrupt withdrawal and also defines a range of illegal practices, including canvassing by public officials or police officers, unauthorised use of community venues for campaigning, paying canvassers, compensating business owners for displaying campaign materials and misuse of public resources. Candidates are further prohibited from disrupting meetings, inciting disorder or making misleading claims. Breaches carry clearly defined sanctions: corrupt practices may result in fines of up to £5,000 and imprisonment for up to 12 months, illegal practices may incur fines of up to £1,000 and custodial sentences of up to three months; personation carries more severe penalties, including the possibility of the election being declared void and an extended period of disenfranchisement. No violations were reported during the 2025 campaign.

Campaigning in the Falkland Islands traditionally involves limited outdoor activity, with a notable absence of posters, banners or other campaign visuals. Instead, candidates focus on publishing

¹² Several stakeholders noted the relatively small number of candidates contesting the Camp constituency. Some also expressed support for a constituency residency requirement, observing that not all candidates standing in Camp actually resided there.



election manifestos that outline their policy priorities and objectives for office. All 19 candidates made use of an opportunity to mail their programmes free of charge to households across the Islands. In Stanley, some candidates relied on informal interactions with voters in more frequently visited public spaces, while all four candidates contesting the Camp undertook door-to-door visits across the sparsely populated areas outside the capital, a practice that is virtually unknown in Stanley. Several candidates also organised small public meetings to present their platforms, with at least one purchasing advertising space to promote such events.

Some first-timer candidates noted the limited number of organised events and the absence of a tradition of self-initiated gatherings, factors that could influence voter interest and perceptions of competitiveness. A prominent feature of the campaign was a series of hustings organised by non-state and media actors, notably the Falkland Islands Chamber of Commerce and *Falklands Radio*. Each hosted three to four events designed to group candidates in ways that encouraged dialogue and comparison of views. The Chamber of Commerce held separate sessions for Camp candidates and divided Stanley candidates between first-time contenders and incumbents, while *Falklands Radio* employed mixed formats across its events.

Although in-person attendance was modest, extensive media coverage and dissemination enabled broader public engagement. Hustings typically combined moderator-led questions with audience participation, at times prompting lively exchanges among candidates and providing voters with clearer insight into their policy positions and priorities. Additionally, the Youth Parliament, which annually tables motions before the Legislative Assembly on issues affecting young people, organised sessions to foster youth and future voter engagement.

Candidate manifestos and campaign platforms covered a wide range of issues. Key economic priorities included the high cost of living; the need for fiscal restraint amid rising public expenditure and declining revenues in some sectors; economic diversification through oil exploration; the establishment of a sovereign wealth fund and a review of the tax system. Other prominent themes were the size and reform of the public service; transparency in Executive Council decision-making and MLA voting under collective responsibility; and sustainable management of immigration in the context of housing shortages and pressures on public services.

Some contestants also focused on land allocation for housing; education and vocational training, including apprenticeships to encourage young Falkland Islanders to return; major infrastructure projects, such as the port, power station and renewable energy development; user-pays policies and the end of the Sure telecommunications monopoly; as well as continued support for the agricultural sector. Campaigning in Camp emphasised the constituency's distinctive characteristics and needs, reflecting dispersed settlements across multiple islands, a small population and a rural context.

Several stakeholders characterised the 2025 campaign as placing particular emphasis on accountability for the records of outgoing MLAs. They also suggested that incumbents may have faced



closer scrutiny, while others observed that some candidates may not have fully understood the scope of MLA responsibilities and campaigned on promises that could prove undeliverable. Discussions grew more animated at some events, particularly regarding the Legislative Assembly and FIG's handling of the salmon farming review and associated public consultation. This prompted a number of candidates to refrain from responding to topical questions, citing comments by the Attorney General that firmly expressed prior views could preclude future involvement in related decision-making. Some stakeholders considered this self-censorship to limit open and robust democratic debate and potentially privilege certain positions. In addition, the business community's concerns received notable attention, which may have influenced the focus of discussions relative to other issues and perspectives.

Online campaigning played an increasingly prominent role in the 2025 Election, with the *Falkland Islands Election* Facebook group providing a platform for personalised voter engagement across a range of topics. While some content was repetitive and occasionally included derisive comments or unverified claims, the forum nonetheless enabled digitally engaged voters to interact more proactively with the candidates. Certain practices raised stakeholders' concerns about fairness and contributed to administrators pausing the group three days before Election Day, which highlighted the need for an appropriate level of moderation. Alongside personal social media pages, at least one candidate used targeted online advertising as a cost-effective way to reach voters, thus signalling a potentially new phase in the evolution of local digital campaigning.

Overall, the campaign atmosphere was calm, even when debates of contentious topics became more heated. Fundamental freedoms were respected throughout and candidates competed on a level playing field with no apparent advantage for incumbents; the Mission also received no reports suggesting otherwise.¹³ Voters were able to make informed choices through candidate outreach and media-disseminated hustings events, despite the absence of outdoor campaigning.

CAMPAIGN FINANCE

The law establishes campaign spending limits, which differ by constituency: candidates may spend up to £1,000 in Stanley and £1,200 in Camp. These amounts were increased in October 2025, doubling the previous ceilings. In addition, candidates may incur up to £100 in personal expenses. All 19 candidates filed their campaign expense returns with the Returning Officer within 35 days of the conclusion of the election, as required by law. No public subsidies are provided, apart from one free postal communication per candidate to each voter.

Most candidates and stakeholders told the Mission that the spending limits are adequate and fair, contributing to a level playing field. However, there is no regulation of campaign donations and no

¹³ Some stakeholders raised concerns about a potential conflict of interest, noting that one candidate remained Head of the FIG Communications and Media Office while running for office. Additionally, both this candidate and another continued hosting weekly radio shows, which some believed could have given them greater public exposure than other contestants.



established tradition of private contributions to candidates; stakeholders suggested that such donations could be viewed negatively by the public. Foreign donations are not explicitly prohibited, which could pose a risk to transparency and electoral fairness. As the economy evolves, there is concern that the role of money in politics could grow, potentially affecting the integrity and perception of the electoral process.

Recommendation: Campaign finance regulations could be reviewed and strengthened, including with a view to rules on donations.

MEDIA

Media in the Falkland Islands is primarily governed by the 1989 Media Trust Ordinance, which establishes the Falkland Islands Media Trust with responsibility for the editorial policy and oversight of the local newspaper and radio. The 2017 Communications Ordinance provides for the licensing and regulation of communication services and establishes an independent Communications Regulator, appointed by the Governor, responsible for telecommunications and broadcasting licensing and related regulatory functions. The Regulator's remit focuses on infrastructure, spectrum management, licensing and consumer protection rather than editorial content. These frameworks create a structure for communications and media oversight in the Falkland Islands, alongside the broader constitutional protections for freedom of expression.

The Falkland Islands' media landscape comprises three main outlets: the *Penguin News* (print) newspaper, *Falklands Radio* and *Falkland Islands Television* (FITV).

Penguin News, the Islands' only print newspaper, is published weekly and provides coverage of local affairs, government developments and community issues. Despite partial public ownership and modest FIG subsidy, it is regarded as independent and impartial, with a commitment to balanced reporting on matters affecting island life. The paper now largely funds its operations through advertising. During the 2025 Election, *Penguin News* published manifestos up to 500 words and responses to up to four questions returned by 18 of the 19 candidates, offering voters valuable insights into key issues, among others including immigration and cost of living concerns.¹⁴ The newspaper is available in both print and online formats.

Falklands Radio delivers regular programming that includes local news, music, phone-ins and community updates, alongside international content such as the BBC World Service. The station actively engaged in the election campaign, organising three hustings events, broadcasting candidate interviews and providing ongoing news bulletins and public service announcements. Its coverage and conduct during the hustings events were widely regarded as balanced, with journalists posing

¹⁴ One candidate opted not to participate.



thoughtful and probing questions that allowed listeners to form more comprehensive impressions of candidates' perspectives. In addition to traditional radio broadcasts, the station utilises online platforms to reach wider audiences.

Falkland Islands Television (FITV) is privately operated, with a mixed ownership including private shareholders and a minority government stake, supported by a small public subsidy. It provides local programming, including news coverage, community event reports and dedicated election content. During the 2025 campaign, FITV aired all four Chamber of Commerce hustings events and broadcast interviews with all candidates, combining both common and tailored questions. Content was made available on television and online platforms such as YouTube, ensuring accessible, informative and neutral coverage.

There is no freedom of information legislation in the Falkland Islands and some stakeholders opined that government transparency is not always exemplary, including in relation to lobbying and industry engagement. Media freedom is respected and while stakeholders recalled a small number of past civil cases involving the Falkland Islands Media Trust, they were not seen to significantly restrict reporting. Nevertheless, in a small media environment, such cases may contribute to cautious editorial practices, particularly when covering sensitive sectors of the economy and government-industry relations. Exit polling is not conducted, with assessments of the elections largely informed by process reporting and self-regulation.

Overall, despite the limited diversity of the media ecosystem and partial reliance on state funding, existing outlets maintained impartiality and ensured that all political viewpoints were represented fairly. Reporting fostered professional scrutiny of candidates' policies and, in several instances, encouraged debates among contenders. While reliance on a few outlets may limit exposure to alternative perspectives, election coverage remained broadly informative and contributed to public engagement on key issues. By providing voters with clear insights into candidates' positions, the main media outlets played a critical role in enabling the electorate to make informed decisions on Election Day.

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS

Women are well-represented in the workforce and across key sectors, including government, business and election administration. The Chief Executive, appointed in early 2025, is the first woman and Falkland Islander to hold this post; in this capacity, she also served as the Returning Officer for the 2025 election. The Registrar General and one of the two Deputy Returning Officers were also women, as were the majority of the polling officers.

However, women's representation in the Legislative Assembly remains low. Of the eight outgoing MLAs, two were women. Among the 19 candidates standing, there were only three women, two in Stanley and one in Camp, with two ultimately elected. While the legal framework guarantees equal rights to stand for office, socio-cultural factors, the demands of political life and absence of targeted



support mechanisms may limit participation. Introducing mentorship programmes, gender-sensitive policies and other support measures, such as candidate workshops specifically tailored to women candidates, could help increase engagement and strengthen women’s representation.

The Constitution includes provisions that support human rights and equality, which implicitly extend to persons with disabilities.¹⁵ However, full and equitable access to the electoral process shows some shortcomings. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) has not been extended to the Falkland Islands and the Constitution disqualifies individuals certified as incapable due to mental incapacity from voting or standing for office.¹⁶ While legislation allows participation by persons with disabilities unless individually deemed incapable, which is consistent with European Court of Human Rights rulings requiring individual assessment, this approach conflicts with CRPD Committee guidance, which considers any exclusion on the basis of disability to be discriminatory.¹⁷

In practice, voters with disabilities face few overt barriers, but independent participation and vote secrecy are not always fully guaranteed.¹⁸ Physical accessibility is largely provided, though the absence of sign language interpreters and assistive technologies may limit inclusion for electors with hearing or visual impairments. Alternative voting methods offer some accommodation, but without a broader inclusion strategy, opportunities for participation remain more limited for persons with disabilities, highlighting areas for improvement in accessibility and electoral equity.

Recommendation: To more closely align with international standards on the rights of persons with disabilities, extend the CRPD to the Falkland Islands and amend election laws to reflect compliance.

Several stakeholders also noted that members of larger migrant communities, some long and well-integrated into the Falkland Islander community, remain hesitant to stand for office. Targeted support measures to encourage broader participation could help address these gaps.

Recommendation: To advance more equal participation and representation, consideration could be given to strengthening efforts to increase inclusion and diversity among the candidates.

¹⁵ Legislative work on an anti-discrimination bill remains incomplete.

¹⁶ CRPD Article 29 guarantees the participation of persons with disabilities in political and public life, while Article 21 obliges States to take all appropriate measures to ensure access to fundamental freedoms for persons with disabilities.

¹⁷ Paragraph 48 of the CRPD Committee’s General Comment No. 1 (2014) to Article 12 of the CRPD states that “a person’s decision-making ability cannot be a justification for any exclusion of persons with disabilities from exercising their political rights, including the right to vote [and] the right to stand for election”.

¹⁸ Ramps were provided for voters in Stanley and Goose Green.



POSTAL AND MOBILE VOTING

On 10 December 2025 observers accompanied all three mobile teams serving voters in East Falkland and one mobile team that travelled in West Falkland. The voting process was assessed as Good or Very Good in all Mission observations.¹⁹ The mobile teams generally adhered to the published schedule and the few short delays did not appear to affect the number of voters who turned up to cast their ballots at the designated stops. The polling staff followed the procedures related to identifying the voters and issuing ballots, as well as ensuring ballot secrecy. The process was assessed as transparent and well administered in all Mission observations.



CPA BIMR observer accompanying a mobile team

Due to many voters expressing concern that they may be engaged with the unexpected arrival of a cruise ship arrival on Election Day, the returning officer decided to keep one mobile team at the Town Hall in Stanley for an hour after the completion of their route in East Falkland. This information was promptly communicated to voters on social media. The initiative facilitated the exercise of franchise for more than 40 voters and demonstrated agility and responsiveness by the election administrators.

On Election Day, the Mission also observed the mobile voting team that visited the health care institutions, allowing over 70 staff and patients to cast their ballots. As with the other mobile teams, the Mission noted that voting was administered smoothly and professionally, with care and patience shown by polling staff to elderly and infirm voters.

VOTING ON ELECTION DAY

All three polling stations observed by the Mission opened on time and the opening procedures were followed. Ballots, voter lists, polling instructions and other electoral materials were in place and ballot boxes were sealed after being shown to be empty to the first voter. The polling process was well run and assessed as Good or Very Good in all 12 observations by the Mission during the day. The polling staff followed the procedures and issued ballots only after identifying voters and asking whether they had already voted elsewhere. Proxy voters were found on the lists and several postal voters delivered

¹⁹ Mission observers are asked to provide an overall assessment of the process using a four-point scale, ranging from Very Bad to Very Good.



their ballots to polling stations. Secrecy of the vote was consistently preserved; however, voter numbers were recorded on the ballot counterfoils, which in principle may jeopardise the secrecy of the ballot. Only one instance of family voting was observed, with spouses voting together in one booth.

The long queue that formed in the Stanley Town Hall polling station in the morning was orderly and voters were processed efficiently. Observers noted that arrangements were made to use multiple ballot boxes consecutively, with the ballot paper account prepared for the filled ballot box before the next ballot box was put to use. This resulted in reduced processing capacity for some 20 minutes in the morning, followed by about 10-minutes of suspended voting at peak hours, during which time the queue grew considerably. Following resumption of voting, however, the queue was processed relatively quickly.

Recommendation: Consideration should be given to organising voting in Stanley in a way that maintains the same processing capacity throughout the day and does not require suspension of voting, for instance by procuring larger ballot boxes and/or creating another polling station.

All four polling stations closed on time - two polling stations in Camp at 16:00hr and two polling stations in Stanley at 18:00hr. Polling staff did not have difficulties with filling ballot account forms and election materials were securely packed and sealed. Ballot boxes from the two polling stations in Camp (Fox Bay in West Falkland and Goose Green in East Falkland) were securely transported to Stanley by a government airplane.



Ballot boxes from the two polling stations in Camp, Fox Bay in West Falkland and Goose Green in East Falkland, securely transported to the count in Stanley by government airplane



COUNTING AND RESULTS

By 18:30hr all ballot boxes from mobile, stationary and postal voting were assembled at the counting centre at the Town Hall in Stanley and verification of their contents commenced, followed by mixing of ballots and vote count. The Mission assessed the verification and counting process as Very Good, noting efficiency and commitment of the counting staff. Trust in election administration was again on display during this stage, with candidates not availing themselves of opportunities to monitor the process closely. All votes were counted twice by the counting staff, with an additional check in case of discrepancies. Results were tallied manually and, for the first time, supplemented by a double-blind entry carried out electronically.

Camp constituency results were announced before 21:00hr, followed by Stanley constituency results at 22:00hr. There was only one invalid vote, which attested to the effectiveness of voter education and general awareness of the polling procedure. All candidates accepted election results and no requests for recount were made.

Turnout was 81 percent in Stanley and 90 percent in Camp, demonstrating a high level of civic engagement in this Election. Of the eight members elected, two were incumbents and two were women.

ELECTORAL JUSTICE

While the law provides for redress to courts on electoral issues, there is little or no history of these provisions being invoked. No appeals related to voter registration have been made to the Magistrate's Court in recent years. Candidates have not sought the Senior Magistrate's or Supreme Court's relief for failure to submit their election expenses returns. Nor has any election in recent history been questioned by way of an election petition. Indeed, the case of MLA disqualification on the basis of acquiring second nationality mentioned above (see The Right to Vote section) appears to be the first election-related court judgment in the history of the Falkland Islands.

Undoubtedly, availability of judicial remedies in electoral legislation is an important bulwark against violations of electoral rights and all stakeholders should be aware of these legal provisions. There may also be room for introducing an administrative mechanism for matters outside court jurisdiction which may nevertheless affect electoral integrity, such as unbecoming conduct by a candidate or an election official. A Complaints Commissioner, who currently does not have any election-related mandate, could be suitable for such a role.



RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Facilitate further debates on how equality of the vote may be better ensured, in keeping with evolving considerations related to effective and equitable representation.
2. Take measures to preserve institutional memory in election administration and ensure the necessary knowledge can be effectively shared with less experienced election officers.
3. Give consideration to additional voting arrangements facilitating individual participation in elections, in an effort to reduce reliance on proxy voting.
4. Explore possibilities for improving the voter registration system, including by moving to an individual rather than household approach.
5. Consider introducing a voter identification requirement at polling stations.
6. To advance more fully inclusive elections, candidate eligibility requirements, including disqualification of individuals on the basis of mental incapacity and rules on allegiance to foreign powers, could be reviewed and revised to align with international standards.
7. Campaign finance regulations could be reviewed and strengthened, including with a view to rules on donations.
8. To more closely align with international standards on the rights of persons with disabilities, extend the CRPD to the Falkland Islands and amend election laws to reflect compliance.
9. To advance more equal participation and representation, consideration could be given to strengthening efforts to increase inclusion and diversity among the candidates.
10. Consideration should be given to organising voting in Stanley in a way that maintains the same processing capacity throughout the day and does not require suspension of voting, for instance by procuring larger ballot boxes and/or creating another polling station.

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CPA BIMR ELECTION OBSERVATION SERVICES:

The first objective of the BIMR Strategy is to strengthen parliaments and the skills of their members. As part of this work, CPA BIMR facilitates election observations when invited to do so.

For more information about these services, please contact the CPA BIMR Secretariat at:
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