

Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body Thursday 10 September 2026 (Session 7)

Reimbursement of Members' Expenses Scheme – Additional Regional Office

Executive summary

1. The SPCB is invited to consider a request from Mark Griffin MSP and Jenny Young MSP for an additional regional office in the Central and Lothians West region.

Issues and options

2. At present the Scheme allows the larger regions to have an additional office on application to the SPCB, in particular, the Highlands and Islands, North East Scotland, South Scotland, West Scotland and Mid Scotland and Fife Regions. The SPCB delegated agreement of these routine requests to the Head of Travel and Expenses at the beginning of the session with any novel or contentious issues to be brought to the SPCB for consideration.
3. As the SPCB will be aware, there were a number of boundary changes prior to the 2026 Scottish Parliament elections. This affected a number of constituencies and regions and redrew some of those boundaries. This included what was the Central Scotland Region and the Lothian region which was redrawn to create a new Central and Lothians West region and Edinburgh and Lothians East region.
4. These changes were considered when re-writing the new Scheme for Session 7. Following assessment, the SPCB concluded that there was no need to change preexisting arrangements for the number of regional offices when compared to the previous region boundaries.
5. Mr Griffin and Ms Young are seeking SPCB consideration to have an additional regional office. This would mean that there were 2 Labour regional offices within the Central and Lothians West Region where the Scheme currently only permits one (with no option to apply for a second). The SPCB will wish to note that in this and previous sessions both the Central and Lothians regions were only permitted one office to be shared by all regional Members of each party due to the size of the region and the ability to travel across the region and as stated above this was not changed when the Scheme was reviewed and the boundaries redrawn.
6. The Members reasoning for the application is that they believe there has been a significant expansion of the region's geographical footprint through the incorporation of West Lothian, the resulting challenges in providing equitable access to parliamentary representation, the substantial travel times between key population centres, and the operational demands associated with supporting two Scottish Labour regional MSPs serving a new, larger and less densely populated region.

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7. The Members currently have an office at Coatbridge Business Centre, Coatbridge, which the Members believed provided an effective central base for constituents across the previous region because of where the main population centres of the previous region were based and the travel corridor between those centres and the office. The Members believed the Coatbridge area was therefore the rational centre point.
8. The inclusion of West Lothian creates a region stretching from Broxburn and Livingston in the east to Coatbridge and Cumbernauld in the west, encompassing four distinct local authority areas and numerous major population centres. The SPCB will wish to note that whilst the Region has gained constituencies in West Lothian it has also lost areas covering East Kilbride and Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse constituencies to the south and southwest of the region. (See Annex A for map of old and new region)
9. The revised region contains some of Scotland's largest urban communities outside the major cities and now includes significant population concentrations in West Lothian, Falkirk and North Lanarkshire. The Members believe that the practical effect of this is that many constituents face substantial travel times to access their regional MSPs in Coatbridge, while MSPs and staff face increasing demands travelling across the region to fulfil parliamentary duties.
10. It could therefore be reasonable to assume that Coatbridge may no longer be the best location for a single regional office within the region. However, on the basis of the previous region make up and location of the office, many constituents from the further points of the region would already have had to travel similar distances to go to this regional office.
11. The Members have also advised that as opposed to a single travel corridor, the new region represents a concentrated population loop, with a significant, unpopulated land mass at its centre. As a result, they believe there is no obvious central point in the region with a significant population. It could therefore be reasonable to assume that any regional office location will automatically present travel difficulties for those travelling to/from the further points away on the loop irrespective of its location or whether there is one or more offices.
12. The Members also state that they believe that maintaining the office in Coatbridge will result in approximately a two-hour round-trip journeys to parts of the region, making the office inaccessible to some constituents and significant staff and MSP time lost to travelling.
13. The Members believe that a second regional office would significantly improve accessibility for constituents, reduce travel burdens, strengthen community engagement, improve staff efficiency, and ensure that parliamentary resources are deployed in a manner proportionate to the size and nature of the region.
14. The Scheme as it currently stands does not permit the Central and Lothian West region to have more than one office and we do not recommend that the SPCB agree to this request. An exception for one set of regional Members could not be made as the Scheme must be applied equally to all Member and therefore the

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change would have to be applied to **all regional Members** for the Central and Lothian West region **as a minimum**.

15. The ability to apply for an additional office only applies to the larger regions where there is more than one Member returned for the region for a party. So if SPCB were to make this change to the Scheme and add Central and Lothian West to those regions for session 7 this would mean that other parties with more than one member in the Central and Lothian West region could also apply to have an additional office. In this instance that would apply to the Reform regional Members only as the other parties only have either one or no representatives in the region.
16. All such applications in previous sessions have been declined, albeit without there having been a boundary change in those instances.
17. Officials believe that if this is opened up to one region then other regions where Members can only have one office, namely Edinburgh and Lothian East and Glasgow regions would also apply to have an additional office. This would result in a potential further 2 offices in Edinburgh and Lothian East and a potential additional 3 offices in Glasgow at significant cost to the SPCB budget.
18. As the Scheme is currently written, if Members have an additional office the level of money increases to allow them to meet these costs and it would therefore mean a potential additional cost of just under **£152,000 this year** and **higher in future years** depending on the level of provision increase each year.
19. Last session the SPCB considered options around offices including allowing all Members to have their own office as a part of the review of the Members' Expenses Scheme, but it was agreed that this was not a simple or affordable option at that time although a commitment was made to review local office provision in Session 7.
20. Given that the revised boundaries were reviewed by the previous SPCB and a decision made not to adjust regional office numbers as well as the fact that whilst the region has increased geographically by an estimated 25 – 35% it is still considered as a medium sized region in comparison to the other regions who can currently have an additional office. Also, once the net movement of constituents has been taken into account there is only a small difference compared to the old region. We would therefore recommend that the SPCB reject any such request at present with the commitment to review the number of regional offices in the planned review of offices later this session.

Governance

21. The Scheme does not currently permit the Central and Lothian West Region to apply for an additional office. If the SPCB were minded to consider this request, it would require a change to the Members Expenses Scheme, a significant uplift to the budget and consideration by the full Parliament subject to all the points made above about further applications from other regions and regional Members.

Resource implications

22. Agreeing to this application would have implications wider than the two Members applying and would mean an additional £152,000 would be needed to cover the costs of this change to the Scheme should all Members able to take up the option of a second office do so in those regions where it is currently not an option.

Publication Scheme

23. This paper can be published in line with the SPCB's publishing policy.

Next steps

24. To advise the Members of the outcome and dependent on the outcome take steps to ensure that the Scheme is changed if required or the requirement is built into the planned review of offices.

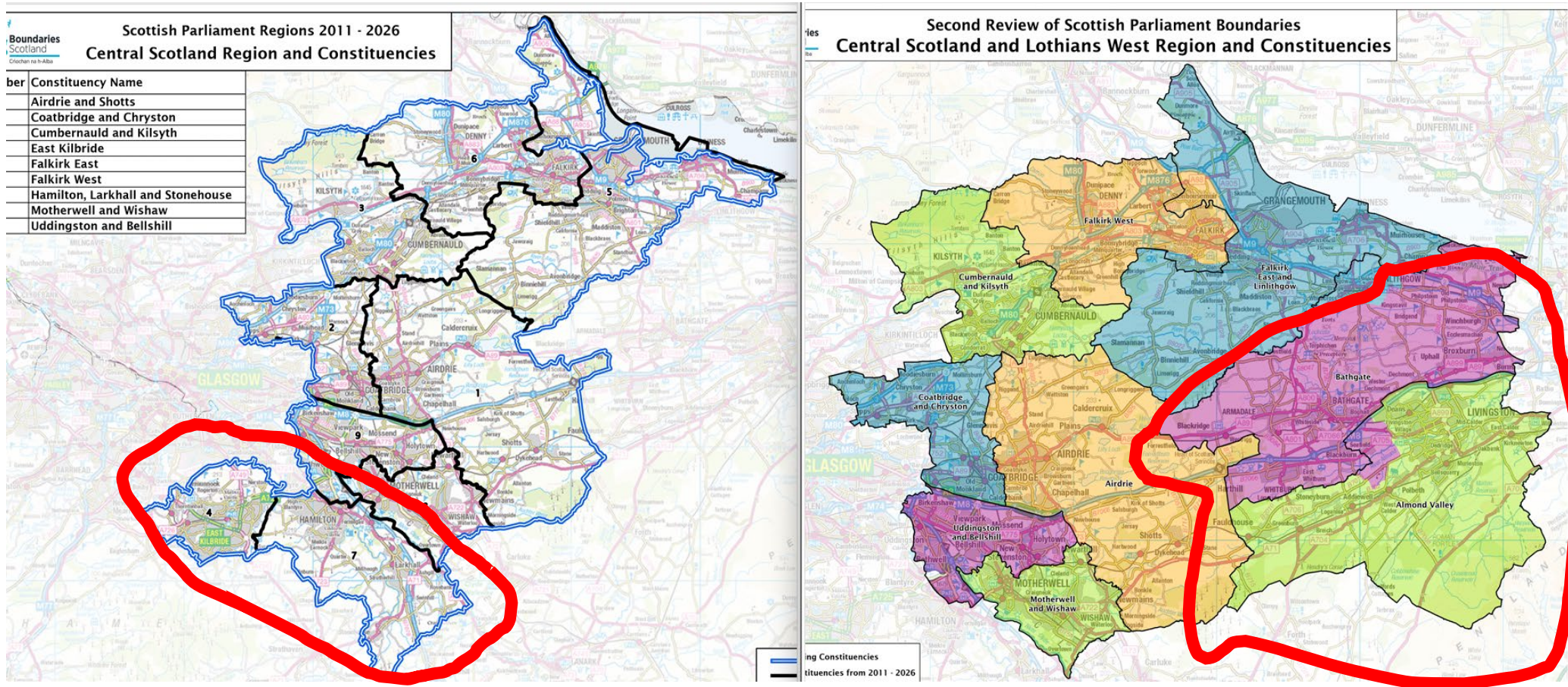
Decision

25. The SPCB is invited to consider this application and if content with official recommendation to reject the application and build the option into the wider office review planned for later in the session.

Travel and Expenses Office

September 2026

Annexe A: Map of old and new region Red highlight shows lost and gained constituencies



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Estimated Comparison of 2026 Regions

2026 Region	Estimated Area (sq mi)	Relative Size
Highlands and Islands	~12,000-13,000	Very largest
South Scotland	~5,000-5,500	Very large
North East Scotland	~3,500-4,000	Large
Mid Scotland and Fife	~2,500-3,000	Large
West Scotland	~1,600-2,000	Medium-large
Central Scotland & Lothians West	~950-1,050	Medium
Edinburgh & Lothians East	~500-700	Small
Glasgow	~250-350	Smallest