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The SNP's decision to allow prisoners to vote in the upcoming Shetland by-election "opens the door" for inmates to cast their ballot more widely in future, it has been warned.

Ministers confirmed today that they have legislated to allow prisoners serving sentences of 12 months or less to take part in the vote later this month.

And while hardly anyone will be affected by the change this time around, the Scottish Conservatives said it would set a precedent for future elections.

MSPs won't even get to debate the change, as Holyrood will be in recess until after the by-election, which follows the resignation of sitting MSP Tavish Scott.

Scottish Conservative equalities spokeswoman Annie Wells said:

"Although there will be little impact on this particular election, this ill-judged move opens the door for prisoner voting more generally.

"It sets the all-important precedent, and means the SNP will be enabling dangerous criminals to vote in future elections.

"That's not what the people of Scotland want to see, and not what prisoners deserve.

"The fact this is being done without any proper debate or consultation is particularly unacceptable.

"Victims of crime will be furious that people guilty of assault, domestic violence and serious drugs offences will be able to influence our political future."