

Department for Constitutional Affairs

Constitution Directorate
Strengthening democracy and rights

Electoral administration - the next steps

John Sills

Head of Electoral Policy,
Department for Constitutional Affairs

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Three Years in the Making....

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**The Electoral Administration
Act received Royal Assent on
11 July 2006**

Into force on 11 September

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- **Rules for transparency and permissibility of party loans**
- **Registration provisions for 2006 annual canvass**
- **Offences relating to postal vote applications and conduct of elections**
- **Provisions on regulation of political parties**
- **Power for Electoral Commission to set performance standards**

Parliament had its say - some of the new measures added to the Bill

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- **Service voters - extension of renewals**
- **Postal vote identifiers - dates of birth**
- **Death of a candidate provisions**
- **Voting in person for people detained under the Mental Health Act**
- **Revised arrangements for observers**
- **Photos on ballot papers (pilots)**
- **Political loans regime**

So did you - before Bill was introduced, and now on the regs

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- Clarify that EROs must write out to all existing postal and proxy voters
- Possibly reduce reminders to non-respondents from two to one
- Changes to size of signature box on application form
- Enable EROs to write to long term postal voters on single date in fifth year

Four principles underpin the Act

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- **Access and engagement**
- **Confidence and security**
- **Enhancing professional delivery**
- **Openness and transparency in political party financing**

What could success look like?

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- **Access:** higher registration levels, esp. young and BME groups; voter-friendly polling stations
- **Engagement:** better awareness of voting and registration and other participation opportunities
- **Confidence:** reduced perception that system open to abuse
- **Enhanced professional delivery:** clear expectations, appropriate funding
- **Party funding:** a transparent regime which people trust

Four key issues

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- **Access - the new registration arrangements**
- **Engagement - the power to promote and the funding for it**
- **Confidence - the new postal voting identifiers**
- **Enhanced professional delivery - funding**

Registration: new duty and 11 day deadline

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- **Big concern for Parliament was state of registers - completeness and/or accuracy**
- **Concerns about personal canvassing**
- **Data sharing issues**
- **11 day deadline will help potential voters**
- **But what if they want a postal vote?**

Promoting participation

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- **The new ring fenced fund will provide resources to help boost awareness**
- **Should work out at about £6000 for average size authority**
- **ECU will administer**
- **We'll aim to have available by New Year**
- **Opportunities for partnerships (eg, in London £6k could become c.£200k)**

Postal vote identifiers

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- **Enhancing security, without knock on effects on electoral register**
- **Logistical implications:**
 - **Renewing permanent PV register**
 - **Checking signatures/DOBs: levels, criteria**
 - **Impact on Count**
- **Funding through grants for first two years**

Funding electoral services

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- **Debate about long term funding - CSPL**
- **EA Act reforms funded by DCA:**
 - £21m in Revenue Support Grant
 - one off grants for barcoding
 - promotion fund (ring fenced)
 - grants for postal vote ID changes
- **RSG has delivered patchy results**
- **What we are doing - evidence, discussion with DCLG**
- **What are you able to do?**

Timetable for rules/ regulations and further Act commencement

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- **14 August: regs to EC for formal consultation**
- **15 September: EC formal response**
- **October: aim to lay regs in Parliament**
- **December: regs made (subject to parliamentary time)**
- **Nov: lay Combination of Polls regs**
- **Dec: lay Local Elections conduct rules**
- **Jan 2007: lay mayoral, referendum rules**
- **Jan-May: Rest of EA Act commenced before May elections (won't apply to by-elections before May); lay GLA rules**

A central role in DEMOCRACY

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“Electoral officers aren’t just the keepers of the rules; they are the foundation of Democracy”

**This is what success should
look like**