



Structure of Electoral Administration

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Commission

Structure of Electoral Administration in the UK

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Where we started from

- 2007 elections across UK
- May 2007- Appointed Ron Gould to undertake independent review of 2007 Scottish Elections
- October 2007- Published Independent review of Scottish Elections (Gould report)
- November 2007- Commission publishes initial response to Gould Report
- December 2007- Commission publishes status report of electoral administration in UK and begin project.
- March 2008 - Published detailed issues paper
- Wider debate

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Consultation

- Over 9 months the Commission has consulted with (amongst others):
 - Electoral Administrators (ROs and EROs)
 - Parliamentarians
 - UK and Scottish Governments
 - Political Parties Panels (UK and Scotland)
 - Parliamentarians across UK
 - Association of Electoral Administrators
 - Scottish Assessors Association
 - Society of Local Authority Chief Executives
 - Society of Local Authority Lawyers and Administrators

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Findings from consultation

- Recognition of inconsistencies in the way that elections are delivered
- Those who work in electoral administration agree there is a need to provide a consistently high quality of service
- Need for clearly defined roles and responsibilities
- Fragmented legal and funding frameworks need to be addressed

But:

- No consensus on whether fundamental change in election management was necessary, or what form - if any - change should take

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Findings from consultation – political parties and elected representatives

‘We are left with a situation where no-one takes responsibility and nobody knows who is in control’

‘There is an endemic problem that some places are too small to run effective electoral services’

‘Need people close to the ground to run it on a consistent basis’

‘Something has to go wrong to demonstrate the flaws in the system, otherwise people think it is generally OK’

‘Case law is old and not reflective of the current way elections are run’

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The case for change

- Unlikely current arrangements strong option if starting from scratch
- Significant changes needed, from ROs/EROs, Governments and EC
- Not currently a compelling case for removing responsibilities from local government
- But, future electoral registration policy may require more significant change

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Agenda for change

To ensure the interests of voters are put
first in electoral administration

- Clarify roles and responsibilities
- Improve coordination
- Strengthen leadership and accountability

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Clarifying roles and responsibilities

- Development of **policy and funding** frameworks responsibility of governments
- Development of **legal frameworks** responsibility of governments, subject to the approval of relevant legislatures
- **Planning and delivery** in accordance with legal framework responsibility of ROs and EROs
- Setting **standards** and monitoring performance responsibility of the Electoral Commission

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Improving coordination and strengthening leadership

- Strong case exists for establishing a more coordinated approach
- Must be led by those who run elections
- Provide leadership and support and help deliver consistency
- Should be stronger and more focused than previous steering groups
- Should have statutory recognition
- Not 'new' bodies – builds on existing roles
- Ensure clear demarcation between policy, operations and scrutiny
- Maintain independence

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Next steps

- Establish Electoral Management Boards
- Provide Convener/Chairs of management boards with powers to direct
- Develop EC role in driving performance improvements
- Consolidate and simplify the legal framework for elections
- Work to address structural causes of funding shortfalls
- Consider implications of a coordinated registration service across the UK

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Next steps

- Immediate debate about accountability and consistency in Scottish elections (including government consultations)
- Electoral administration professionals can start making changes without requiring legislative change
- Build on European elections from June 2009
- Legislative changes – post 2010?

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www.electoralcommission.org.uk