

The Association of Electoral Administrators



Statement from the Association of Electoral Administrators (AEA) on publication of The UK Government's response to the Electoral Commission's reports and AEA's position statements on the European Parliamentary and local elections in May 2019 and the early Parliamentary General Election on 12 December 2019.

Peter Stanyon, AEA chief executive, comments: "Regrettably, the Government's response to our and the Electoral Commission's elections reports from 2019 does not address many of the issues raised or recommendations made. With complicated combinations of local elections due to run across the UK on 6 May 2021, the fragility of the electoral system is set to be tested again. We remain concerned about the expectations of citizens and the resilience of the electoral community, coupled with the added complications of the ongoing pandemic.

"Since 2017 we have been calling for a single Electoral Administration Act, as recommended by the Law Commissions. The UK Government's response seems to kick that far down the road. Instead there is a reinforcement on introducing more complexity through the introduction of voter ID and votes for life for expats.

"These proposed measures are not the issue. Bolting on piecemeal legislation to an already creaking system is. Thorough legislative reform could incorporate these new measures while ensuring the foundations of electoral law are firmly set in the 21st Century and not, in some cases, 1918.

"I am also concerned that no changes are planned around elections funding and payments. The current arrangement for fees and charges is not fit for purpose. While voter registration costs remain with councils, huge peaks in demand for registration before national polls adds unplanned strain on council finances. With two unscheduled national polls in 2019, this issue was particularly acute, compounded by a lengthy claims process for recoverable costs.

"There are some welcome points in the Government's response. We fully support the new project considering how to reduce duplicate voter registration, which continues to be a major administrative issue. We are also pleased to see the issue of capacity within the electoral supply system highlighted. Software developers, printers and mailing companies were stretched to the limits by the 2019 polls which had a knock-on effect on teams administering those elections.

"Despite being disappointed with the Government's apparent lack of appetite to address the numerous issues identified over the last few years

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by ourselves and the Electoral Commission, we look forward to continuing to work with officials in ensuring voters continue to receive the highest standards of service.”

Report links:

- [The UK Government's response to the Electoral Commission's reports and AEA's position statements](#) Published 28 September 2020.
- [Electoral Commission report: UK Parliamentary General Election 2019](#) Published 21 April 2020.
- [AEA post-election statement: The 2019 UK Parliamentary General Election](#) Published 5 February 2020.
- [Electoral Commission report: May 2019 European Parliamentary elections and local elections](#) Published 8 October 2019.
- [AEA post-election statement: The Electoral Landscape in 2019](#) Published 16 September 2019.

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