

The Association of Electoral Administrators



The hard work of Returning Officers and electoral administrators is rightly reflected in the newly published Public Opinion Tracker 2021 from the Electoral Commission.

Peter Stanyon, AEA Chief Executive commented: "Record high levels of public confidence in how elections are run, the process of voting and registering to vote are something the whole electoral community should be incredibly proud of.

"The electoral process is a complicated continual work in progress, and scheduled May polls are major projects requiring months' worth of hard work – even more so during the current pandemic. Everyone involved in running elections should take a moment to reflect that their immense efforts and professionalism are appreciated.

"However, let me be clear, elections are only delivered due to the huge personal sacrifices of a small number of individuals dealing with legislation that often works against the effective delivery of democracy. All UK governments need to consider how to bring capacity and resilience into this fundamental public service."

Noting the report's findings on voter ID, Stanyon continued: "Careful consideration is crucial to make sure voter ID is deliverable and does not lead to disenfranchisement, particularly for voters from already underrepresented groups.

"Voter ID must not negatively impact on people who wish to vote, and must avoid unnecessarily adding to election bureaucracy, costs and risk. Sufficient lead-in time for legislation, administrative planning, delivery, and voter education is vital to ensure any scheme is successful.

"It is clear photographic voter ID cards will be necessary, but we believe the responsibility for producing cards should rest with the local authority, not Returning or Electoral Registration Officers, who are already stretched to their limits in pre-election periods. It is also crucial that cards be nationally funded, with no additional cost burden pushed onto councils."

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