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electoral administration bulletin



Issue 100 (England and Wales) – 13 March 2015

May polls 2015: national advertising launch on Monday

On Monday we'll be launching our national advertising campaign. Our television advert has now been finalised and [can be viewed here](#) (please note this is embargoed until Monday 16 March, so please don't share until then).

The advert seeks to address under-registration in an engaging way by using the concept of 'loss aversion' from behavioural economics. In certain situations people are more likely to be motivated by realising they may lose something, than the prospect of acquiring a gain.

Filmed with a mix of actors and members of the public captured on hidden cameras, the TV ad shows people's reaction to being stopped doing everyday activities they thought they should be able to do. The message at the end as someone is turned away from a polling station is simple: You can't vote, unless you're registered by 20 April.

TV spot times

On our website you can find a list of [the TV spot times](#). This document lays out when the advert will be playing to allow you plan for when there might be spikes in registration applications.

Northern Ireland

As we have done previously, we will also be running a public awareness campaign in Northern Ireland. This will launch on 1 April, and will run across television, radio, print, outdoor and online advertising. This will use the same television advert as Great Britain, with the end-frame amended to reflect that there

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is no online registration in Northern Ireland.

New resources to support campaign

We have produced resources that support the television advertising. You can see [posters and web banners](#) and [videos and infographics for different audiences](#) on our website.

How you can help

Our campaign launch **on Monday 16 March** is a great hook to help you publicise voter registration with your local communities. We want to make it as straightforward for you as possible, so here are four easy actions:

- 1. Tweet about it** – We've drafted up some example tweets to help you spread the word. [You can find these here](#). Why not follow us on Twitter as well (@ElectoralCommUK), and re-tweet the tweets we'll be issuing?
- 2. Share our advert from Monday (please note this link is embargoed until Monday so please do not share before then)** – This is [on our YouTube Channel](#). Feel free to tweet it, put it on your Facebook page, embed it on your website, play it on screens in your building or send it to your staff.
- 3. Include an article on your website / blog / in your residents' magazines** – We know many of you have great networks of contacts on your email lists and lots of visitors to your websites. We've created [a short article \(available in Welsh here\)](#) that you can use to highlight the campaign.
- 4. Issue a press release** – We've created [a template press release \(available here in Welsh\)](#) which you can amend and send to the media in your area.

May 2015 polls: final reminder of request for information on count arrangements

Thank you to everyone who has completed the survey(s) providing us with information on their count arrangements. There are, however, still some constituencies and local authorities from whom we haven't received any information. If you haven't completed the survey(s) already, please do so by not later than **5pm on Tuesday 17 March**. The surveys can be accessed using the links below:

- [Count survey for UKPGE – English](#)
- [Count survey for UKPGE – Welsh](#)
- [Count survey – local elections in England](#)

We will be publishing the information we have received on count timing and locations on our website by the end of next week. For any constituencies (and local authority areas where

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there are scheduled local government elections) that we haven't received information from, the summary we publish will include the statement 'No information received', and we will direct anyone who wants information on count timing or location for that area to the relevant local authority. While we will update the spreadsheet at several points in the run-up to the May polls if we receive further information after 17 March, please be aware that we will not be making updates on a rolling basis as information is received.

May polls 2015: tallying at postal vote openings

We have been asked for our view on the legality of tallying at postal vote opening sessions, and we can confirm that it is our view that the legislation prohibits it.

This is because, at a postal vote opening, it is not permissible to 'attempt to ascertain the candidate for whom any vote is given in any particular ballot paper or communicate any information with respect thereto obtained at those proceedings (Section 66(4)(d) of the Representation of the People Act 1983 (as amended)).

This provision therefore prevents those present at the postal vote opening from attempting to ascertain the way individual ballot papers are marked. This interpretation is consistent with Regulation 84 Representation of the People (England and Wales) Regulations 2001 which stipulates that, when opening the postal votes, the Returning Officer 'shall keep the ballot papers face downwards and shall take proper precautions for preventing any person from seeing the votes made on the ballot papers'.

It is therefore clear that, at a postal vote opening, ballot papers are to be kept face down and individuals are not permitted to look at the ballot paper to attempt to see how it is marked. In the context of tallying, therefore, it is not the act of counting itself that is prohibited, but the necessary prerequisite of looking at the individual ballot papers to see how they are marked.

We are amending Part 5 of our guidance for candidates and agents at UK Parliamentary and local elections to make this point explicitly and expect to publish an updated version later today. We recognise that you may already have printed and distributed packs for prospective candidates, in which case you will need to consider how you can make candidates and their agents aware of this in some other way, such as by covering this in your briefing sessions and making clear at postal vote openings that tallying is not permitted.

IER: advance notice of data collection

We will shortly be sending you a link to a survey which will ask for a small number of key pieces of data related to the 1 April register update. These will be headline figures such as total electorate and the number of additions to the register since 1

December. These should hopefully be straightforward pieces of data to provide. This is clearly a busy time for you, but we would appreciate responses to this as soon as possible following 1 April. The data will help us to form a national picture of the electorate ahead of the May polls.

Changes to Party Election Finance (PEF) online

From 1 April 2015, the Electoral Commission will be launching a new site to replace the old [search pages in PEF Online](#). The new site will introduce a new way to access the register of political parties and each party profile. Using the new site will be faster, more user friendly and will introduce the ability to save or share a direct link to a party's profile page.

While we expect that this new site will make accessing the information you use much easier, we understand that this is not a good time to be making changes, and so we will continue to maintain the old site until after the elections in May. The old site will be kept up-to-date and you will be able to access it throughout the nominations period to check party names, descriptions and emblems.

We will provide full instructions for how to find information using the new site in a future bulletin.

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