

Lord Grocott
House of Lords
London
SW1A 0PW

29 June 2011

Dear Lord Grocott

Parliamentary Question on Referendum Costs

I am writing in reference to your recent Parliamentary Question (HL10270) in which you asked Her Majesty's Government what was the total cost of the referendum on the alternative vote, including costs incurred by local authorities, central Government and the Electoral Commission.

As you will have seen from the answer from Lord McNally, the Electoral Commission is wholly independent of government and is accountable to Parliament through the Speaker's Committee of the House of Commons. A member of the Speaker's Committee responds to questions about the operation of the Electoral Commission in the House of Commons; however there is no such mechanism for answering questions in the House of Lords. I thought it would, therefore, be helpful to write to you directly with the answer to your question in relation to the costs incurred by the Commission.

As this was the first UK wide referendum to be run by the Commission under the PPERA framework we kept our budgets under review to identify where savings could be made. We revised our original budget down from £9.3m to £8.9m in January 2011 and resubmitted it to the Speaker's Committee for their agreement.

Our current forecast is that the Electoral Commission's spending on the referendum is likely to be around £7.9m - £1m under the agreed budget. However, the final total may not be known until later in 2011. This is, for example, because although no significant issues involving alleged breaches of the PPERA rules have been put to us to date, compliance with the rules will be looked at further when the campaigners' expenditure returns are received later in 2011 and, if we decide we need to

The Electoral Commission
3 Bunhill Row
London EC1Y 8YZ


Tel 020 7271 0500
Fax 020 7271 0505
Textphone 18001 020 7271 0500
info@electoralcommission.org.uk
www.electoralcommission.org.uk

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undertake any enforcement activity as a result of those checks, this may increase our final costs.

I am sending copies of this letter, for information, to Lord McNally; and to Gary Streeter MP, who answers parliamentary questions in the House of Commons on behalf of the Speaker's Committee on the Electoral Commission. I will also ensure that a copy is placed in the library of the House of Lords and on the Commission's website.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter Wardle". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Peter Wardle
Chief Executive