

## Statement from the Electoral Commission: Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Bill (date of the referendum)

During the second day of Committee Stage consideration of the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Bill in the House of Lords last night an amendment was accepted which removed the date previously specified for the proposed referendum on the voting system for UK Parliamentary elections. Instead, the Bill as amended now provides for the referendum to be held before 31 October 2011, but does not provide a specific date for the poll to be held.

While the Commission has always been clear that it is for Parliament to specify the date for the proposed referendum, there must be clarity and certainty about that date as soon as possible. We have been working with local Counting Officers and Returning Officers to prepare plans on the basis of a referendum on 5 May 2011, alongside the other polls planned for that day, and in our most recent assessment we said that sufficient progress had been made for us to confident they will be well-run. Similarly, those intending to campaign at the referendum will have been developing their plans for the date specified in the Bill as introduced.

We will continue to plan towards a possible referendum on 5 May 2011 but given the importance of clarity about the rules on how the polls will be conducted we have written to the Government today asking them to set out as soon as possible how they intend to proceed so that Parliament can specify the date for the proposed referendum.

We will continue to advise Parliament of any risks associated with the planned polls for 5 May and on the workability of any proposal to specify the date of the proposed referendum.

**7 December 2010**