

The Electoral Commission

Media Handbook

**UK Parliamentary General Election
(UKPGE)**

Thursday 7 May 2015

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Note: [A separate media handbook](#) for Northern Ireland has been produced

Websites

www.electoralcommission.org.uk

The Commission's website has a dedicated section for journalists featuring the Electoral Commission's news and views – including our press releases and statements. Our website has information on political party donations in the run-up to the election and has a 'Guidance' area with information for candidates and those administering the election.

www.gov.uk/register-to-vote

This website is where the public can register to vote online. It's quick and easy to use. Since its launch in June 2014, millions of applications to register to vote have been submitted. **We would encourage its use in as many articles that you write about the election as possible so that your readers know where they can register.**

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1 Who's who at the UKPGE and their responsibilities?

The [Fixed-term Parliament Act 2011](#) set the date for the UK Parliamentary General Election (UKPGE) as Thursday 7 May 2015.

Local elections are also taking place across much of England (excluding London) on 7 May. In addition, there are five mayoral elections. For a full list of where these elections are taking place, [click here](#).

For more information about the local and mayoral elections, see **Appendix B**.

1.1 (Acting) Returning Officers

At a UK Parliamentary election in England and Wales, the Returning Officer is largely a ceremonial position and is either the High Sheriff or Mayor of the local authority. The administration of the election, including the conduct of the count, is the responsibility of the (Acting) Returning Officer.

The Returning Officer only receives the writ. Although they can also choose to declare the result at the end of the count and return the writ.

In Scotland, the Returning Officer for a UK Parliamentary election is the same person as the Returning Officer for local government elections. They are therefore responsible for all aspects of the administration of the May 2015 election.

1.2 Presiding Officers

(Acting) Returning Officers appoint Presiding Officers to run polling stations. Duties include organising the layout of the polling station, supervising poll clerks, issuing ballot papers, assisting voters, accounting for all ballot papers and ensuring that ballot boxes are transported securely to the count venue.

1.3 Electoral Registration Officers

Electoral Registration Officers are responsible for the preparation and maintenance of the electoral registers and list of absent voters within their area. They must ensure that the electoral registers are as complete and accurate as possible.

In England and Wales the ERO is the same person that is the ARO. In Scotland, the ERO is not the RO – they are a person appointed by the local authority or by a combination of local authorities.

1.4 The Electoral Commission

The Electoral Commission is an independent body set up by the UK Parliament.

At the election, we are responsible for:

- producing guidance for (Acting) Returning Officers, setting performance standards and reporting on how well they have done

- producing guidance for candidates standing for election and their agents
- producing guidance for parties that are campaigning at the election
- producing guidance for non-party campaigners that are campaigning at the election
- registering political parties
- publishing details of where political parties and candidates get their money from and how they spend it
- promoting public awareness of the election and how to take part in it; and
- reporting on the conduct of the election

2 UK Parliamentary General Election 2015 timetable

Event	Date
Regulated period for campaign spending by political parties begins	Friday 23 May 2014
Regulated period for campaign spending by non-party campaigners begins	Friday 19 September 2014
Start of 'long campaign' regulated period for candidate spending	Friday 19 December 2014
Dissolution of Parliament and issue of writ	Monday 30 March 2015
Start of 'short campaign' regulated period for candidate spending	Monday 30 March
Receipt of writ	Tuesday 31 March
Last day for publication of notice of election	Thursday 2 April
Deadline for candidates to deliver nomination papers to (Acting) Returning Officer	4pm, Thursday 9 April
Deadline for candidates to withdraw	4pm, Thursday 9 April
Publication of statement of persons nominated	In most cases, 5pm, Thursday 9 April. If objections to nominations have been made, no later than 4pm, Friday 10 April
Deadline for first weekly pre-poll donation and loan report by political parties and non-party campaigners to the Electoral Commission	Sunday 12 April. Electoral Commission to publish information on Thursday 16 April
Deadline for second pre-poll donation and loan report to the Electoral Commission	Sunday 19 April. Electoral Commission to publish information on Thursday 23 April
Deadline to register to vote	Monday 20 April
Deadline for applying for a postal vote	5pm, Tuesday 21 April
Deadline for applying for a proxy vote (except for emergency proxies)	5pm, Tuesday 28 April
Deadline for third pre-poll donation and loan report to the Electoral Commission	Sunday 26 April. Electoral Commission to publish information on Thursday 30 April
Deadline for fourth pre-poll donation and loan report to the Electoral Commission	Sunday 3 May. Electoral Commission to publish information on Tuesday 5 May
Polling day	7am to 10pm, Thursday 7 May
Deadline for issuing replacement postal ballot papers	5pm, Thursday 7 May
Deadline for applying for an emergency proxy	5pm, Thursday 7 May

vote	
Election count	To start as soon as practically possible after 10pm, Thursday 7 May. Results expected to be announced on Friday 8 May.
Deadline for fifth pre-poll donation and loan report to the Electoral Commission	Sunday 10 May. Electoral Commission to publish information on Thursday 14 May
Deadline for sixth and final pre-poll donation and loan report to the Electoral Commission	Thursday 14 May. Electoral Commission to publish information on Tuesday 19 May
Last day for submission of candidate spending returns to the (Acting) Returning Officer	Friday 12 June for results announced on Friday 8 May
Deadline for political parties and non-party campaigners that have spent £250,000 or under to submit campaign spending returns to the Electoral Commission	Friday 7 August
Deadline for political parties and non-party campaigners that have spent over £250,000 to submit campaign spending returns to the Electoral Commission	Saturday 7 November

SECTION A – Candidates

3 Becoming a candidate

3.1 Who can become a candidate?

Anyone who wants to stand at the UKPGE must be:

- at least 18 years old on the day of nomination; and
- a British citizen, a citizen of the Republic of Ireland or a qualifying Commonwealth citizen

A candidate at the general election is not required to be registered as an elector or live in the Parliamentary constituency in which they wish to stand.

3.2 Are there any rules barring a candidate from standing?

Some of the rules barring a candidate from standing to become a Member of Parliament include if:

- they are civil servants, members of police forces or members of the armed forces
- they are the subject of a bankruptcy restrictions order made by a court in England, Wales or Northern Ireland (though bankruptcy in itself does not bar them from standing); or, their estate has been sequestered by a court in Scotland and they have not been discharged
- they have been convicted of an imprisonable offence and are detained for more than a year, as defined under the Representation of the People Act 1981
- they have been found or reported guilty of a corrupt or an illegal electoral practice within the past five or three years respectively

For more detailed guidance on what disqualifies someone from standing to be a Member of Parliament, see the Electoral Commission's guidance for candidates and agents, Part 1, pages 3 – 5
http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0019/173017/UKPGE-Part-1-Can-you-stand-for-election.pdf

3.3 How does someone become a candidate?

Candidates can choose to stand for election as a Member of Parliament either as a 'party candidate' or as an 'independent candidate'.

The earliest date that someone can officially become a candidate is on the day that the UK Parliament is dissolved – which is likely to be **Monday 30 March**. However, prospective candidates can be selected by their party, or announce their intention to stand before this.

A candidate must submit their nomination papers to the (Acting) Returning Officer by 4pm, Thursday 9 April in order to stand.

3.4 What does someone who wants to stand as a party candidate in the UKPGE have to do?

Prospective party candidates must submit the following to their (Acting) Returning Officer:

- completed nomination, home address and consent to nominations forms
- the signatures of 10 registered electors from the constituency supporting the nomination
- a deposit of £500
- a certificate from the political party authorising the use of the party name or a party description as registered by the Electoral Commission
- a written request to use one of the party's registered emblems (optional)

Candidates standing for a political party can request the use of a party name or description on the ballot paper, but they cannot request both.

3.5 What does someone who wants to stand as an independent candidate in the UKPGE have to do?

Prospective independent candidates must submit the following to their (Acting) Returning Officer:

- completed nomination, home address and consent to nominations forms
- the signatures of 10 registered electors from the constituency supporting the nomination
- a deposit of £500.

3.6 How can we know who all of the candidates are?

The relevant (Acting) Returning Officer will publish the full list of candidates standing. This will happen in most cases by 5pm on Thursday 9 April. If objections to nominations have been made, they will publish the list no later than 4pm, Friday 10 April.

To find out how and where they will publish this list, you will need to contact them directly.

4 Campaigning at the election

4.1 What can candidates say about one another during the campaign?

As at all elections, it is illegal to make a false statement about the personal character of a candidate in order to affect their election. Rules about defamation also apply to election materials.

The police may investigate allegations of the specific electoral offence of making a false statement. Defamation issues are a matter for the civil courts.

As with all elections, the Electoral Commission does not have any regulatory role in relation to the content of campaign material or what candidates say about each other.

4.2 Are there any electoral rules regarding campaign materials?

Yes, by law, candidates must use “imprints” on all their printed campaign material.

4.3 What is an “imprint”?

All printed material (i.e. posters, placards and leaflets) must include the name and address of the printer and promoter (the person who authorised the material to be printed). This is so that electors can be clear about the source of the campaign material. It is an offence not to include an imprint on election material.

The Electoral Commission also recommends that candidates, wherever possible, place an imprint on their electronic materials (i.e. websites, emails and social media platforms), but this is not a legal requirement.

4.4 Can candidates see the electoral register?

Yes. Candidates (once they officially become one) are entitled to receive, free of charge, a copy of the full electoral register and the lists of people voting by post or proxy (the absent voters’ lists) for the constituency that they are contesting.

Candidates can only use the full electoral register to help them campaign and to check that donations they receive come from a permissible source.

4.5 Do candidates get free delivery of leaflets?

Yes, candidates are entitled to one free postage to electors in the constituency. This can include:

- one unaddressed election communication of up to 60 grams to every postal address, or
- one election communication of up to 60 grams addressed to each elector

Candidates contact [Royal Mail](#) directly to make the arrangements for their leaflets.

5 Campaign spending limits and rules on accepting donations

5.1 How much can candidates spend on their election campaign?

The regulated period for a UK Parliamentary general election is divided into two periods: the 'long campaign' and the 'short campaign'. Each period has its own spending limit. The spending limits for each period are calculated by adding together a base amount and a variable top up that takes into account the number of registered electors in the constituency that is being contested.

5.2 What are the spending limits?

Regulated period	Dates	Fixed amount	Variable amounts
Long campaign	Friday 19 December to Sunday 29 March*	£30,700	6p per registered parliamentary elector in a borough constituency (burgh constituency in Scotland) or 9p per registered parliamentary elector in a county constituency
Short campaign	Monday 30 March to Thursday 7 May	£8,700	6p per registered parliamentary elector in a borough constituency (burgh constituency in Scotland) or 9p per registered parliamentary elector in a county constituency

*The long campaign ends on the day **before** an individual officially becomes a candidate. The earliest date that someone can officially become a candidate – and the short campaign can start - is on the day that the UK Parliament is dissolved – **Monday 30 March**.

If a candidate, or someone acting on their behalf has announced their intention to stand before the 30 March, the long campaign will end on 29 March.

If an individual's intention to stand as a candidate is not announced before the 30 March, the long campaign will end and the short campaign will begin on either the day that they do, or the date that they are nominated as a candidate, whichever is the earlier.

5.3 How do candidates know how many people live in the constituency they are standing in?

The number of Parliamentary electors in a particular constituency is based on the electoral register as it stands on the last date for publication of the notice of election (4pm, Thursday 2 April).

This date is after Parliament has been dissolved (and the 'short' campaign has begun) which means that candidates will not know the exact amount that they can spend in the 'long' campaign until after it has ended.

Candidates can contact their local elections office at any given point in the long campaign however, to request the most up-to-date number of electors to help them plan their spending during the 'long' campaign.

5.4 What activities count towards the spending limit?

Candidate spending includes any expenses incurred, whether on goods, services, property or facilities, for the purposes of the candidate's election during the regulated period. These activities include:

- advertising of any kind - for example, posters, newspaper adverts, websites or YouTube videos
- unsolicited materials sent to voters - for example, letters or leaflets
- transport costs
- public meetings
- staff costs - for example, an agent's salary
- accommodation - for example, the campaign office
- administrative costs - for example, telephone bills, stationary and photocopying.

5.5 Are there any activities that don't count towards the spending limit?

Yes. Activities that do not count include:

- anything (except adverts) appearing in a newspaper or on a licensed broadcast channel
- facilities you use because you are entitled to do so as a candidate, such as a public room for a meeting
- volunteer time including time spent by your staff that you do not pay them for
- someone's main residence
- someone's personal car or other means of transport
- general computer equipment bought for personal use

5.6 Does campaign spending by a political party in a particular constituency count towards a candidate's spending limit?

Only if the spending is on items that promote the candidate, for example, a letter sent to electors introducing the candidate and their local policies.

If the items promote the party, for example, posters with the party name and not the candidate's name, that expenditure would count towards the political party's campaign spending limit.

5.7 What rules apply to hustings?

Hustings can be organised by anyone, and are events designed to give the public an opportunity to hear from the candidates or parties standing for election in their constituency.

There is no legal requirement for the person or body (including non-party campaigners) organising a husting to invite all candidates or parties standing in a constituency. However, spending on hustings may be regulated depending on how it is organised. This may happen where the organiser selectively invites or excludes candidates or parties. If the organiser only invites some candidates or some parties, then a share of the costs of the event may count towards the election spending of those who are invited.

Where the hustings is organised by a non-party campaigner, then spending on the event may count towards their spending limit if they do not have an impartial reason for not inviting all candidates or parties.

If the event is organised by a non-party campaigner and all candidates or all parties standing candidates in a constituency are invited (even if they do not all attend) or there are impartial reasons for not inviting certain candidates or parties, then it does not count towards candidate, party or non-party campaigner spending.

The Electoral Commission has produced guidance for non-party campaigners who are thinking of organising a Hustings
http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/169480/sp-hustings-npc-ukpge.pdf

5.8 Is there a limit on donations a candidate can accept in the UKPGE?

No. However, candidates can only accept donations of money, items or services worth more than £50 towards their campaign spending from a permissible source (see section 5.9).

All donations worth more than £50 must be published in the candidate's spending return. They do not need to declare donations with a value of £50 or less.

5.9 Who can make donations to candidates?

Anyone can make a donation worth less than £50 to candidates.

Candidates must ensure they only accept donations of more than £50 from a permissible source. Donations that are not from a permissible source must be returned to the donor within 30 days. After that, the donation may be forfeited.

Permissible donors in the UK are defined as:

- an individual on a UK electoral register
- a GB registered political party
- a UK registered company which is incorporated within the EU and carries on business in the UK
- a UK registered trade union
- a UK registered building society
- a UK registered limited liability partnership
- a UK registered friendly society
- a UK based unincorporated association

For an overview of the rules and more detail on what counts as a donation and accepting donations, see Electoral Commission guidance for candidates and agents, Part 3 Section B:

http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/173074/UKPGE-Part-3-Spending-and-donations.pdf

5.10 To what extent can political parties fund their candidates?

Many political parties run a local ‘fighting fund’ for their candidate. If the fund is managed and controlled by the party and not the candidate, then donations to the fund are usually treated as having been made to the party.

However, during the regulated period, any donations made by the party to a candidate above £50 must be reported in the candidate’s spending return.

5.11 Who do candidates report their regulated spending to and when?

Candidates standing to be a Member of Parliament (or their agents) must submit their campaign spending returns to their (Acting) Returning Officer within **35 days of the election result being declared**.

The return should separate donations and spending between the ‘long’ and ‘short’ campaigns.

If no spending is incurred, a nil return must be submitted by the candidate (or their agent).

5.12 What happens if a candidate exceeds their spending limit?

Allegations relating to the Representation of the People Act (RPA) 1983, including candidate spending, are generally made to the relevant local police force to consider.

Whilst the Electoral Commission does have a statutory duty to monitor compliance with parts of the RPA relating to candidates and agents’ expenses, it is not legally empowered to investigate and impose sanctions for offences under the RPA.

SECTION B – Political parties

6 Campaign spending limits, donations and what must be reported

6.1 What is the maximum that a political party can spend on campaigning?

The amount a party can spend is the greater of:

Either:

Part of GB	Spending limit
England	£810,000
Scotland	£120,000
Wales	£60,000
Total	£990,000

or

£30,000 multiplied by the number of seats that a party is contesting in Great Britain.

If a party is contesting each of the 650 Parliamentary constituencies across the United Kingdom then it would be: £30,000 x 650 = £19.5 million.

To see how spending limits could vary, depending on the number of constituencies they are contesting and where they are contesting them, see our Guidance to political parties, pages 6 – 7:

http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0009/164079/sp-ukpge-2015.pdf

The limits apply to any spending incurred during the regulated period (see 6.2).

The limits also apply to spending that took place before the regulated period on things (such as leaflets) which are then used during the regulated period.

6.2 When is the regulated period?

The regulated period began on Friday 23 May 2014 (the day after the European Parliamentary elections) and ends on the day of the poll, Thursday 7 May 2015.

6.3 What activities count towards the spending limit?

Party spending is defined as items, facilities and services that are used to promote itself, or criticise other parties, during the regulated period.

These activities include:

- advertising of any kind - for example street banners, websites and videos
- unsolicited material sent to voters - for example, letters or leaflets
- the manifesto and other documents setting out the party's policies
- market research to find out how people intend to vote
- press conferences
- rallies and events, including the cost of people's attendance and any goods, services or facilities provided
- transport in connection with publicising the campaign
- production costs on party election broadcasts

6.4 Are there any activities that don't count towards the spending limit?

Yes. Activities that do not count include:

- permanent, fixed term or temporary staff costs where the staff member has a direct employment contract with the party
- volunteer time
- office running costs, except costs that are higher than usual because of campaigning, such as telephone bills
- people's travel, food and accommodation costs while they campaign, unless you reimburse them
- expenses met out of public funds. For example, security costs for VIP visits
- anything which a candidate declares on their spending return

For more information on political party campaigning at the 2015 UK Parliamentary General Election, see our guidance:
http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0019/106363/to-campaign-spend-rp.pdf

6.5 When do political parties report their regulated spending?

The deadline for registered political parties that have spent £250,000 or under to submit their return to the Electoral Commission is **7 August 2015**.

The deadline for registered political parties that have spent over £250,000 to submit their return to the Electoral Commission is **7 November 2015**.

6.6 Is there a limit on donations that a political party can accept in the run-up to the UKPGE?

No. However, parties can only accept donations worth more than £500 towards their campaign from a permissible source (see section 5.8).

6.7 When will the political parties report their donations to the Electoral Commission?

Political parties central HQs must continue to report any donations they receive on a quarterly basis that total over £7,500 to the Electoral Commission. Local accounting units must report donations that total over £1,500.

The Electoral Commission will publish the October – December 2014 donations in February 2015. January – March 2015 donations will be published after the UKPGE, in May 2015.

After 30 March and up until the end of polling day, political parties central HQs must submit weekly donation and loan reports which will be published by the Electoral Commission.

6.8 What are the weekly donation and loan reports publication dates?

Political parties central HQs must submit weekly donation and loan reports setting out what donations and loans they have received over £7,500 after 30 March up until polling day.

Reporting period	Deadline to submit report	Date Electoral Commission will publish donations and loans
30 March – 5 April	Sunday 12 April	Thursday 16 April
6 April – 12 April	Sunday 19 April	Thursday 23 April
13 April – 19 April	Sunday 26 April	Thursday 30 April
20 April – 26 April	Sunday 3 May	Tuesday 5 May
27 April – 3 May	Sunday 10 May	Thursday 14 May
4 May – 7 May	Thursday 14 May	Tuesday 19 May

After the UKPGE has taken place, the next donations that political parties and their accounting units will report to the Electoral Commission will be in the quarterly report covering the period April to June. These will be published in August 2015.

SECTION C – Non-party campaigners

7 Rules for non-party campaigners at the UKPGE

7.1 What are ‘non-party campaigners’?

Non-party campaigners are individuals or organisations that campaign in the run-up to elections, but are not standing as political parties or candidates.

A non-party campaigner may, for example, be a campaigning organisation, a trade union, a charity, a faith group, a company or an individual. As at previous UKPGEs, non-party campaigners can campaign even though they are not standing as a political party or candidate.

Any non-party campaigner that intends to spend £20,000 in England or £10,000 in any of Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland during the regulated period (19 September 2014 – 7 May 2015) must register with the Electoral Commission and follow the rules on campaigning as set out in legislation.

To see which non-party campaigners have so far registered with the Electoral Commission, visit: <http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/find-information-by-subject/political-parties-campaigning-and-donations/non-party-campaign-spending-and-donations-at-elections/register-of-non-party-campaigners>

7.2 How are non-party campaigners affected by the “Lobbying Act”?

Non-party campaigners that spend money on certain campaigning activities that can be reasonably regarded as intended to influence voters in the run-up to an election have been regulated since rules were first put in place in 2000.

The Transparency of Lobbying, Non Party Campaigning and Trade Union Administration Act 2014 (the “Lobbying Act”) has changed the rules that are set out in PPERA and means that:

- a wider range of campaigning activities will be subject to new rules on spending.
- there are lower national spending limits
- there are increased reporting requirements for registered campaigners
- higher registration thresholds

You can read the briefings that we issued on the Act calling for changes as it passed through parliament [here](#). We will also be contributing to the review that has been set up by the Government to look at the impact of this legislation, chaired by Lord Hodgson.

7.3 What activities are now covered by this legislation?

In the past, spending on election material was regulated. The new rules now cover spending on election material and:

- public rallies and other public events
- press conferences and media events
- canvassing or market research - for example, using phone banks to encourage people to vote a certain way
- transport in connection with publicising a campaign

7.4 How much can registered non-party campaigners spend at the UKPGE?

Once a campaigner has registered with the Electoral Commission, the amount that they can spend during the regulated period is:

- £319,800 in England (previously £793,500)
- £55,400 in Scotland (previously £108,000)
- £44,000 in Wales (previously £60,000)
- £30,800 in Northern Ireland (previously £27,000)

In addition, non-party campaigners are limited to spending a maximum of £9,750 per constituency.

7.5 Do non-party campaigners have to report donations to the Electoral Commission?

Like political party central HQs, registered non-party campaigners can only accept donations over £500 from a permissible source and must report any donations that total over £7,500 to the Electoral Commission.

The legislation has in addition introduced new pre-poll reporting requirements for registered non-party campaigners.

7.6 What are the pre-poll reporting requirements for non-party campaigners?

Registered non-party campaigners must complete three pre-poll donation reports setting out what donations they have received (even if they subsequently refuse them) over £7,500 between the start of the regulated period (19 September 2014) and the day before the dissolution of Parliament (29 March 2015). This includes details of the donor.

During this pre-poll period, registered non-party campaigners must also report any donations that they receive which are below £7,500, but are above £500. They do not need to provide the Commission with details of the donor, just that they have accepted the donations and that they are permissible.

Previously, non-party campaigners would have provided this information after the election.

Reporting period	Deadline for pre-poll reports	Date Electoral Commission will publish donations
19 September – 18 December 2014	Saturday 17 January	Thursday 12 February
19 December 2014 – 18 March 2015	Friday 17 April	Thursday 30 April
19 March – 29 March	Tuesday 28 April	Tuesday 5 May

Registered non-party campaigners must also submit weekly donation reports setting out what donations they have received over £7,500 after 30 March up until polling day.

The dates for when these must be submitted and when they will be published are the same as outlined for political parties central HQs in **Section 6.8**.

7.7 When must non-party campaigners report their spending to the Electoral Commission?

The deadline for registered non-party campaigners that have spent £250,000 or under to submit their return to the Electoral Commission is **7 August 2015**.

The deadline for registered non-party campaigners that have spent over £250,000 to submit their return to the Electoral Commission is **7 November 2015**.

To see the guidance that the Electoral Commission has produced for non-party campaigners, visit: <http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/party-or-campaigner/non-party-campaigners/guidance>

7.8 What support has the Electoral Commission provided non-party campaigners to help them comply with these new rules?

The Electoral Commission produced a comprehensive package of guidance to help non-party campaigners comply with the new rules in [July 2014](#).

In advance of issuing the guidance, the Electoral Commission listened to the concerns of campaigners to understand how its guidance could best help them, held roundtable events across the UK, ran a survey and issued a [series of campaigner updates](#) to more than 1,200 subscribers.

7.9 How has the Electoral Commission worked with the voluntary sector specifically?

The Electoral Commission produced [guidance](#) specifically aimed for charities in collaboration with the Charity Commission, the Scottish Charity Regulator and the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland.

Since the Electoral Commission published its guidance in July. Following specific requests from some charities, it has produced additional [factsheets on common](#)

[campaigning techniques](#) as well as a [Frequently Asked Questions page](#) on its website to help support charities and others as they plan their campaigning activities.

Non-party campaigners are vital to a healthy democracy and the Electoral Commission encourages their active participation in the campaign period ahead of the general election. Where a significant amount of money is being spent on campaigning, it's right that voters can see whose spending that money and what outcome they are campaigning for.

As is the case after any election where there has been a significant change to the rules, the Electoral Commission will comment on how the new rules worked, and the experiences of non-party campaigners, in its statutory post-election report. The Commission will also be actively engaging with the statutory reviewer of the legislation who will report after the election.

SECTION D – The election campaign

8 Party election broadcasts

8.1 How many election broadcasts are political parties entitled to in the run up to the UKPGE?

The decision on how many broadcasts to allocate to political parties is for the broadcasters to decide.

The political parties pay for and produce the content of the party election broadcasts (PEBs), which must observe the law – for example on copyright, defamation, contempt, obscenity and incitement to racial hatred or violence. They must comply with the Ofcom Broadcasting Code or the BBC Editorial Guidelines that relate to harm and offence and fairness and privacy.

More information about how PEBs are allocated will be available from the Broadcasters' Liaison Group, the group of broadcasters that discusses the allocation of PEBs, visit www.broadcastersliaisongroup.org.uk.

The BBC's draft criteria for PEBs can be found at:

http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust/assets/files/pdf/our_work/election_guidelines/2014/peb_draft_criteria.pdf

Ofcom's rules on PEBs can be found at:

<http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/broadcasting/guidance/programme-guidance/ppbrules/>

8.2 Are there rules on impartiality for the media during the UKPGE?

News reports, features and editorials in print or online media are not subject to electoral law, and the law does not require them to be impartial. Political impartiality in broadcast media is covered by the editorial guidelines relevant to that broadcaster:

- The BBC's draft editorial guidelines on broadcasting during the UKPGE can be found at http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust/assets/files/pdf/our_work/election_guidelines/2014/draft_election_guidelines.pdf
- Commercial broadcasters are subject to the Ofcom Broadcasting Code, which can be found at <http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/broadcasting/broadcast-codes/broadcast-code/elections/>

TV, radio and online debates between party leaders are also a matter for the relevant broadcasters and newspapers. The Electoral Commission has no regulatory role in relation to debates between party leaders.
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9 Electoral fraud

The Representation of the People Act 1983 specifies a number of criminal offences relating to electoral fraud. The relevant police force for the area in which the election is taking place would investigate any allegations that an offence may have taken place.

Every police force has designated a Single Point of Contact officer (known as a SPOC) to lead on election-related crime, who will give advice to local police officers. Anyone making an allegation should be prepared to give the police a statement and substantiate their concerns. People can also choose to contact Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111.

Anyone, including candidates, politicians and members of the public, who has evidence of electoral fraud taking place should report it to the police immediately, using the 101 non-emergency number unless there is a crime in progress

9.1 What are the different types of voting offences?

Offences include:

Personation

This is where an individual votes as someone else (whether that person is living or dead or is a fictitious person), either by post or at a polling station, in person or as a proxy.

Undue influence / Intimidation

A person is guilty of undue influence if they directly or indirectly make use of or threaten to make use of force, violence or restraint, or inflict or threaten to inflict injury, damage, loss or harm, in order to induce or compel any voter to vote or refrain from voting.

Bribery

A person is guilty of bribery if they directly or indirectly give any money or procure any office to or for any voter, in order to induce that voter to vote or not vote.

Multiple voting and proxy voting offences

There are various offences regarding multiple voting and proxy voting, including voting (whether in person, by post or by proxy) when subject to a legal incapacity to vote and voting more than once in the same election.

False registration information

It is an offence to supply false registration information to an Electoral Registration Officer. It is also an offence to supply false information in connection with an application for a postal or proxy vote.

9.2 How confident can the electorate feel about postal voting?

Postal voting on demand is more secure following a tightening of the law in 2006 and is used by 15% of the electorate nationally.

Postal voters have to provide their signature and date of birth when applying for a postal vote, and also when casting their postal vote. Both records are checked. If the (Acting) Returning Officer is not satisfied that they match, the ballot paper is rejected.

The system has been further strengthened by the introduction of Individual Electoral Registration in 2014. Anyone applying to register to vote, first has to provide their date of birth and National Insurance number, before going on to provide the additional information above if they want to cast their vote by post.

9.3 How does the Electoral Commission work with political parties to prevent postal vote fraud?

The Electoral Commission has recently agreed with political parties to strengthen its [code of conduct](#) on the handling of postal vote applications and postal ballot packs by political parties, candidates and canvassers. The code says parties and candidates:

- should **never** assist in completing a ballot paper - instead, candidates should always refer the voter to the (Acting) Returning Officer's staff who may be able to arrange a home visit or provide assistance at the polling station.
- should **never** handle or take any completed ballot paper from voters. Instead, voters should be encouraged to post their postal ballot pack themselves - alternatively, the (Acting) Returning Officer's staff can be contacted to arrange for it to be collected.

Some Returning Officers may also identify the need to develop and seek agreement to specific local provisions which supplement the terms of the nationally agreed Code, in order to address identified local risks.

9.4 What happens if a political party breaches the code of conduct?

The Electoral Commission asks political parties to investigate any reported breaches and take action to ensure that any problems are not repeated. This includes potentially taking disciplinary action against party members.

9.5 Who is responsible for putting in place plans to deal with electoral fraud?

The primary responsibility for ensuring that robust plans to prevent and detect fraud are in place lies with the (Acting) Returning Officer and the Electoral Registration Officer(s) for each constituency. They must work closely with their local police force.

[New guidance](#) has been published to support police officers and SPOCs as they put in place plans to prevent and detect electoral fraud in England & Wales. This guidance, which builds on work previously carried out by the Electoral Commission and the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO), now forms part of the College of Policing's Authorised Professional Practice for police forces in England and Wales. Guidance for Scotland can be found [here](#).

9.6 What is the Electoral Commission doing to prevent fraud at the UKPGE?

The Commission is working particularly closely with Returning Officers and local police forces in areas where there have been allegations of electoral fraud at previous elections, and where additional measures may therefore need to be put in place. We're confident that Returning Officers and local police forces in these areas are building on experience to put robust plans in place, and we're supporting them by sharing information and examples of good practice to help strengthen their plans up to and beyond the May elections.

We have focused on their:

- plans for dealing with registration and absent voting applications (for example, ensuring properties where large numbers of people have applied to be on the electoral register are checked)
- arrangements with the relevant police force for identifying and responding to potential electoral fraud are in place
- training for polling station staff on the risk of personation

9.7 The Electoral Commission published a report examining fraud in some South Asian communities. What's being done ahead of the General Election to make sure fraud doesn't take place in those communities?

The [Commission's report](#) identified a combination of factors that meant that some electors from the South Asian community were vulnerable to fraud including:

- strong community networks vulnerable to abuse by unscrupulous campaigners
- low levels of awareness about what's acceptable campaigning activity and low awareness about how to report electoral fraud
- reduced activity by political parties in some areas that may have exacerbated vulnerabilities by allowing community networks to mediate between campaigners and voters.

The Commission has developed a range of resources for (Acting) Returning Officers and police forces to use to raise awareness of what's acceptable behaviour at election time. Materials have also been translated to help people for whom English is not their first language.

The Commission is also working with CrimeStoppers to make sure people can report concerns about electoral fraud anonymously by calling 0800 555 111. This includes being able to provide information in another language via a translation service.

The Electoral Commission has produced [detailed guidance](#) to help all (Acting) Returning Officers across England, Scotland and Wales put in place plans to prevent and detect electoral fraud. **But equally importantly, candidates and political parties must ensure that their supporters don't cross the line between robust and lively campaigns and electoral fraud.**

SECTION E – The voter

10 Registering to vote

10.1 Who can register to vote at the UKPGE?

A person can register to vote in the UKPGE if they are aged 18 or over on polling day; and are:

- a British citizen
- a citizen of the Republic of Ireland resident in the UK; or
- a qualifying Commonwealth citizen resident in the UK

10.2 How can someone register to vote?

As part of the transition to Individual Electoral Registration (which is covered in chapter 12) for the first time, people can now go online to register at www.gov.uk/register-to-vote.

People can still fill in paper registration forms if they prefer. They can contact their local electoral registration office for forms or download them [here](#)

For information about how people in Northern Ireland can register to vote, see the Commission's Northern Ireland [media handbook](#)

10.3 How can UK citizens overseas register and vote?

British citizens living abroad can register to vote online as an 'Overseas Voter' if they have been registered to vote in the UK in the last 15 years.

The introduction of online registration has also made it easier for British citizens living abroad to apply to register.

10.4 How do members of the armed services register and vote?

Service personnel and their families that are based in the UK and unlikely to change address or be posted overseas this year can register to vote online as ordinary electors.

Service personnel and their families can also register as 'Service Voters'. This allows them to be registered for five years at a fixed address in England, Scotland or Wales even if they move around. Service personnel can register online as a 'Service Voter' at <https://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote-armed-forces>.

Service personnel and their families that are based abroad can also apply to vote by post or by proxy. They must consider whether there's enough time for a postal vote to be sent to them and for them to return it to (Acting) Returning Officer before the close of poll (more information in Sections 11.5 and 11.6).

10.5 What support is offered to people with a learning disability to help them to register to vote?

The Electoral Commission has produced an [easy read](#) version of the registration form.

People with a disability can receive assistance from someone else to complete an application – whether that be a paper form or online – but the person who wants to register to vote has to make the declaration. In England and Wales, a person with the relevant power of attorney can also make this declaration.

10.6 What is the deadline to register to vote?

A person must apply to register by **Monday 20 April** for the polls on Thursday 7 May. However, we are encouraging everyone to register as soon as possible rather than wait for the deadline.

10.7 Can someone register at two different addresses?

Yes. A person can register at more than one address, as long as they are resident at each address. However, they can only vote once in a Parliamentary election. For example, students can register if they wish at both their home and their term time address.

10.8 What is the deadline for applying for postal and proxy voting?

Only a person who is (or will be) individually registered qualifies to vote by post or proxy.

- The deadline for applying for a postal vote at the UKPGE is **5pm, Tuesday 21 April**.
- The deadline for applying for a proxy vote, except in the case of emergency, is **5pm Tuesday 28 April**.
- The deadline for applying for an emergency proxy vote is **5pm, Thursday 7 May**.

10.9 Can prisoners vote?

Remand prisoners (those who have not been convicted and sentenced) can vote. Convicted prisoners detained because of their sentence cannot.

The Electoral Commission's aim is to make sure everyone who is eligible and wants to vote is able to do so. The registration deadline is **Monday 20 April 2015**. Anyone who is not registered should visit www.gov.uk/register-to-vote to apply as soon as possible. It's quick and easy. **It would be helpful for any relevant stories you run to highlight this deadline and a link to the online registration website.**

11 The voting process

11.1 When will polling stations be open?

Polling starts at 7am and closes at 10pm.

11.2 What happens if someone is still queuing to vote at polling station at 10pm?

Any voter who arrives at the polling station before 10pm and is still waiting to vote at 10pm **will be able to vote**.

Legislation was changed by the UK Government in 2013 to allow this to happen following a recommendation by the Electoral Commission.

11.3 What different ways are there for someone to vote?

People can choose to vote in one of three ways: in person, by post or by proxy.

11.4 In person

- Registered voters can visit their local **polling station** between 7am and 10pm on 7 May to cast their votes. Before polling day, voters will be sent a 'poll card' which includes details of where their polling station is.
- Voters can only vote at their allocated polling station as stated on this card.
- Polling station staff will be on hand to explain the ballot paper and how to vote.
- Voters do not need to take their poll card with them to the polling station but doing so may help speed up the process.

To see what voters in Northern Ireland have to bring to the polling station, see the Commission's Northern Ireland [media handbook](#).

11.5 By post

If voters do not wish – or are unable – to go to a polling station, they may apply for a postal vote. However, only a person who is (or will be) individually registered qualifies for a postal vote.

To vote by **post**, voters will need to apply for a postal vote before the postal application deadline of 5pm, Tuesday 21 April.

- Postal ballot papers will be sent directly to voters before polling day.
- Voters should complete their ballot paper and their postal voting statement with their signature and date of birth, and return these to the (Acting) Returning Officer before 10pm on 7 May.

- Votes arriving after 10pm on 7 May will not be counted.
- If voters don't leave enough time to post their vote, they can take it by hand to any polling station in their electoral area from 7am to 10pm on polling day.

11.6 By proxy

Voters can also apply to vote by proxy. This is where they ask someone they trust to vote on their behalf, such as a spouse or other family member. However, only a person who is (or will be) individually registered qualifies for a proxy vote. The person acting as proxy will also need to be individually registered.

To vote by proxy, voters need to complete and sign a proxy application form and return it to their local electoral registration office before 5pm, Tuesday 28 April.

11.7 How should voters complete their ballot paper?

At the UKPGE, voters should mark their ballot paper with a single 'X' in the box next to the candidate they wish to be their Member of Parliament for their constituency.

11.8 What advice does the Electoral Commission provide for people with a learning or access disability at the polling station?

The Presiding Officer and poll clerks should be aware of what support they can and should offer a person with a disability if they are asked to provide assistance.

The Electoral Commission has produced a [polling station handbook](#) containing guidance for the Presiding Officer and poll clerks to ensure equal access for all voters to the voting process. This includes guidance on what happens if:

- a disabled voter requests assistance from the Presiding Officer to mark the ballot paper for them
- a blind or partially sighted elector requests a template to help them cast their vote
- a person with a learning disability needs the process of casting their vote explained to them

Mencap have also produced an [easy read guide to voting](#) that is available on the Commission's website.

12 The transition to Individual Electoral Registration

12.1 What is Individual Electoral Registration?

Individual Electoral Registration (IER) is the biggest change to the electoral registration system in almost 100 years. It has replaced the previous, out-of-date Victorian system, where one person in each household registered everyone to vote, with a requirement to register individually. In addition, as part of the move to IER, for the first time ever people are also now able to register online.

The transition to IER began in England and Wales on 10 June 2014. It began in Scotland on 19 September 2014, following the independence referendum.

No one will come off the electoral register because of the ongoing change to IER before the 2015 UK Parliamentary General Election

The move to IER is due to end with the publication of the electoral registers on 1 December 2016. After the General Election, there is an option for the next Government to ask Parliament to approve an Order which would conclude the transition with publication of the registers on 1 December 2015. Anyone who is not registered individually at the time that the transition ends will be removed from the registers.

12.2 How do people register to vote under this new system?

Any new application to register must be made individually. Applications can be made online at www.gov.uk/register-to-vote or by completing an Individual Registration form. Some Electoral Registration Officers will also offer the possibility of making registration applications in person and/or by telephone.

To make the registration system more secure, applicants must now provide their date of birth and National Insurance number as part of their application. These will be checked against records held on the Department for Work and Pensions database to verify the identity of the person making the application.

12.3 What happens if someone doesn't have a National Insurance number?

If a person can't find their National Insurance card, they can still find their number on their payslips or previous letters from the Department for Work and Pensions or HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC). Students may be able to get their number from any applications for a student loan. People can also find their National Insurance number on official paperwork such as letters about benefits or tax credits.

A person who does not have their National Insurance Number can still apply to register to vote, but they must give their ERO the reason why they cannot provide that information. It's likely that they will be asked to provide some other form of ID in order to register to vote.

12.4 Why is the electoral registration system changing so close to a General Election?

Legislation providing for it was initially introduced by the last Government, which was followed up by the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 introduced by the current UK Government.

12.5 How did the move to IER work?

As part of the change to IER, all existing electors had their name and address compared against government records (this was known as the confirmation process). Each elector was sent a letter by their local electoral registration officer advising them either that:

- Their details have matched and so they have been automatically transferred onto the new register. These electors did not need to take any action; or
- They need to re-register, providing their date of birth and National Insurance number. An Individual Registration Form was included with the letter, or they could re-register online at www.gov.uk/register-to-vote.

In its analysis of the confirmation process, the Electoral Commission reported that over 40 million people had their details 'matched' and transferred to the new electoral registers (around 9 in 10 of voters that were already registered). Work is ongoing to get those who could not be transferred automatically and those who are not yet registered, onto the new IER registers.

12.6 When is this transition to IER due to end?

The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 provides that the transition to IER will not conclude until 1 December 2016. That is after the elections that are currently planned to take place in May 2016: elections to the Scottish Parliament, the Welsh Assembly, the Northern Ireland Assembly, for the London Mayor and Assembly, to local authorities in England, and for Police and Crime Commissioners.

There is an option for the next Government to bring this forward to 1 December 2015. The Commission will report again in June 2015 on progress with the transition to IER. Problems with the electoral management systems used by electoral administrators to share information about their electoral registers with the Commission mean that unless this is resolved, it is highly unlikely that the Commission will be in a position to recommend this summer that the end of the transition to IER can be brought forward from December 2016.

12.7 Has there been any funding given to Electoral Registration Officers to try and maximise registration ahead of the General Election?

Last year, the Cabinet Office announced that an extra £4.2 million would be made available to help EROs, and five national organisations, to maximise electoral

registration. In January 2015, the Cabinet Office [announced](#) that an additional £6.8 million in additional funding would be made available to Electoral Registration Officers to encourage voter registration ahead of the UKPGE.

The Electoral Commission has encouraged all Electoral Registration Officers to use that funding to write to every property in their area with details of who's currently on the electoral register at that property. Anyone living at the property, but whose name is not on the letter, will be told to register to vote online or to contact the local authority so that a form can be sent to them.

13 Raising awareness of voter registration

13.1 What are Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) doing to encourage people to register to vote at the UKPGE?

EROs are legally responsible for maintaining the electoral register for their local authority area and are at the forefront of efforts to get as many people as possible onto the registers.

As part of the move to the new Individual Electoral Registration (IER) system, every single ERO had to send their detailed public engagement plans to the Electoral Commission to review. These plans set out how they would reach those people less likely to be moved onto the new registers; and those people that weren't registered at all and how they would encourage them to register to vote.

EROs are using a range of advertising methods to reach their local residents. They have been sending letters to households encouraging people to register to vote and many have developed partnerships with local schools and colleges to encourage young people to register to vote.

13.2 How can organisations help encourage people to register to vote at the UKPGE?

The Electoral Commission began working [with a range of partner organisations](#) – from the corporate, public and voluntary sectors – in summer 2014 to try and reach traditionally under-registered voters and encourage them to register to vote. This activity will continue up to, and beyond, the General Election and includes activity targeted at young people, students, those from certain BME communities and recent home movers, all of whom we know are less likely to be registered.

In December, working with its partners, the Electoral Commission launched a [partnership pack](#) which provided practical suggestions for organisations that wanted to run their own registration drives or other activity ahead of the UKPGE. The pack, and [subsequent updates from the Commission](#), also highlighted activity they could undertake to encourage voter registration.

13.3 Is the Electoral Commission doing to encourage people to register to vote at the UKPGE?

The Commission supported National Voter Registration Day on 5 February on social media and through other activities, such as helping [Operation Black Vote to launch their national bus tour](#) and worked with [Facebook](#) to get information about registration in people's newsfeeds.

The Electoral Commission launched its online campaign to get people registered on 2 February and will launch its main public information campaign on **Monday 16 March** and that will include TV and additional online advertising. This includes activity and channels specifically targeted at under registered groups.

The Commission is doing a series of briefings for Parliamentarians updating them on its public awareness activity, which you will be able to find [here](#) as they are published.

13.4 Overseas voters

The Electoral Commission is also committed to getting as many UK citizens that are now living overseas but remain eligible to vote registered as part of its public awareness activity. To support this objective the Commission:

- is running an online advertising campaign to target as many expats as possible and encourage them to register to vote
- organised an Overseas Voter Registration Day to spread the message via social media that registering to vote is easier than ever before for expats.
- provided template resources for partner organisations with links to the expat community
- Worked with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to get materials shared with British foreign embassies in order for them to undertake local media activities.
- Blogged about its campaign launch which was read in over 70 countries

13.5 Service Personnel

Every year the Ministry of Defence (MOD), with the support of the Electoral Commission, run a campaign to encourage service personnel to register to vote or to update their registration details.

The Electoral Commission:

- will support Unit Registration Officers to hold a Service Registration Day during February and March with packs made up of registration forms, posters and booklets
- will place adverts across forces media
- will work with the MOD internal communications channels to get registration messages to service personnel
- use social media to encourage its partners with links to the service community to spread registration messages

SECTION F – The Count

14 How the UKPGE count works and the declaration of results

14.1 Who is responsible for the count?

The (Acting) Returning Officer has overall responsibility for the counting of the votes. This includes ensuring Presiding Officers transport ballot boxes from polling stations to the count venue in a secure and timely manner; and that those recruited to count ballot papers have been well trained in how to carry out their duties.

14.2 When will the count start?

The [Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010](#) states that “The returning officer shall take reasonable steps to begin counting the votes given on the ballot papers as soon as practicable within the period of four hours starting with the close of the poll”. Polls close at 10pm.

14.3 How will I know when the count will start in different Parliamentary constituencies?

The Electoral Commission has asked all (Acting) Returning Officers to provide the Commission with information about what time they expect to start verifying ballot papers; and what time they expect to start counting the votes.

The Commission will make this information publicly available closer to the election and will send a note to journalists when the information is on its website.

14.4 Who is entitled to attend the count?

The following people are entitled by law to attend the count:

- candidates and one guest
- election agents
- counting agents
- Electoral Commission representatives
- accredited observers
- any other person permitted to attend by the (Acting) Returning Officer

Members of the media and photographers who want to attend a count must contact the relevant local authority communications department to request permission to attend the count and declaration of the results
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14.5 How are the votes counted and the results announced?

There are four stages to the count process.

1) Receipt of ballot boxes

- Postal ballot boxes and ballot boxes from the polling stations arrive at the count venue.

2) Verification

- Staff count the postal ballot papers and verify that the number of ballot papers in postal ballot boxes matches the numbers recorded by the (Acting) Returning Officer.
- Staff also count the ballot papers from each polling station. They verify that the number of ballot papers matches the number of papers issued, as recorded on the Presiding Officer's ballot paper accounts.
- The (Acting) Returning Officer produces a statement showing how many ballot papers have been received against how many ballot papers were expected.

3) Counting of the votes

- Staff sort ballot papers by candidate.
- Staff then count the number of votes cast for each candidate.
- The (Acting) Returning Officer will share the provisional result with candidates and their agents. At this point, a candidate or their agent can ask for a recount of the votes. The (Acting) Returning Officer can refuse the request if they think it's unreasonable.

4) Declaration of the result

- The (Acting) Returning Officer will declare the number of votes cast for each candidate and will then announce the name of the candidate with the most votes as the elected Member of Parliament for the constituency.

14.6 How does the opening of postal votes fit into this process?

It's likely that several postal vote opening sessions will take place before polling day, as well as on polling day itself.

The (Acting) Returning Officer must give candidates at least 48 hours' notice of when and where the sessions will take place. At each opening session, the (Acting) Returning Officer will decide whether or not the date of birth and signatures provided by electors on their postal voting statements match the signature and date of birth previously provided and held on record. If the (Acting) Returning Officer is not satisfied that they match, the vote is rejected.

Candidates can observe the process or appoint a postal voting agent to do so. Anyone attending an opening session must not attempt to look at identifying marks or numbers on ballot papers, disclose how any particular ballot paper has been marked or pass on any such information gained from the session.

All valid ballot papers are placed into ballot boxes and stored securely before being delivered to the count venue for counting after the close of poll.

14.7 What happens with spoiled ballot papers?

Once the verification phase of the count is complete, ballot papers will be sorted by candidate and any doubtful ballot papers will be identified. The (Acting) Returning Officer will adjudicate any doubtful ballot papers in the presence of candidates and agents and the Commission has provided guidance to help them do this.

Spoilt ballot papers are sealed separately to other ballot papers and the the (Acting) Returning Officer will announce how many ballot papers were rejected after they have announced who has been elected as a Member of Parliament.

14.8 Can the result be challenged after it has been announced?

An election petition can be issued if someone wants to challenge a result. In most cases it must be presented within 21 days of the declaration of the result.

For more information on how a candidate could challenge the result of an election, see our Guidance for candidates and agents, Part 6, pages 5 – 6:
http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0016/173023/UKPGE-Part-6-After-the-declaration-of-results.pdf

Appendix A - What happened at the 2010 UKPGE

To see our press release about how much political parties spent at the last UKPGE, click [here](#)

To see their spending returns and invoices, click [here](#)

To see our press release about how much candidates spent at the last UKPGE, click [here](#)

To see how much each candidate spent in specific parliamentary constituencies, click [here](#)

Appendix B – The English local elections and mayoral elections

Q) Where are the English local elections and mayoral elections taking place?

Local elections are also taking place across much of England (excluding London) on 7 May. In addition, there are five mayoral elections (Bedford, Leicester, Mansfield, Middlesbrough and Torbay). For a full list of where the local elections are taking place, [click here](#).

In addition, there's the possibility of council tax referendums and neighbourhood planning referendums taking place in different local authorities.

Q) Who can vote at the local elections and mayoral elections?

A person can register to vote in the local and mayoral elections if they are aged 18 or over on polling day; and are:

- a British citizen resident in the UK
- a citizen of the Republic of Ireland resident in the UK
- an EU citizen resident in the UK; or
- a qualifying Commonwealth citizen resident in the UK

Q) What do candidates need to do in order to stand at the local elections and at the mayoral elections?

Anyone standing as an independent candidate needs to submit completed nomination and consent to nomination forms.

Anyone standing as a party candidate needs to also submit a certificate from the political party authorising the use of the party name or a description as registered by the Electoral Commission, as well as a written request to use one of the party's emblems (optional).

These documents must be submitted to the Returning Officer by **4pm, Thursday 9 April**.

Anyone standing in the mayoral elections need to submit the same documents above as well as a £500 deposit to the Returning Officer by **4pm, Thursday 9 April**.

To find out the list of candidates standing for election, contact the local authority directly.

Q) When does the regulated period for candidates at the local elections and at the mayoral elections begin?

The regulated period for candidates at the local elections begins on the day after the date that they officially become a candidate. The earliest someone can officially

become a candidate is the last date for publication of the notice of election (Thursday 2 April).

The regulated period for candidates at the mayoral elections begins on the date that they officially become a candidate.

Q) What are the campaign spending limits at the local elections and at the mayoral elections?

For local government candidates, the spending limit is £740, plus 6p per local government elector in the ward where the candidate is standing.

For mayoral elections, the spending limit is £2,362, plus 5.9p per registered elector in the local authority where the candidate is standing.

Q) Do candidates at the local elections and mayoral elections have to report donations they receive?

Yes. They must include all individual donations of over £50 accepted during the regulated period. These will be included in their spending return which will be submitted after the elections.

Q) Who do local election and mayoral election candidates report their spending to and when?

Candidates' spending must be reported to the Returning Officer within 35 days of the declaration of the result of the election.

Q) Will I be able to see the spending returns after the election?

Yes. Candidates' spending returns will be available for public inspection at council offices as soon as possible after they are received. Contact your local authority for more details.

To see the guidance that the Commission has produced for candidates standing at the local elections, click [here](#)

To see the guidance that the Commission has produced for candidates standing at the mayoral elections, click [here](#)