Victor the Vote Counter
VO SCRIPT (v10 09-03-11 TL)

1. INTRO

Open to a close up, slow pan across of a wall calendar. Days of the month are panning by, filling the screen.

Hello.
On Thursday May 5th 2011, there will be a referendum on the voting system you use to elect MPs to the House of Commons.

We reach May 5th. It's ringed in big red marker, and 'REFERENDUM' is written on the day.

There are two voting systems for you to choose between: the current system and a different one. To explain them both, I'd like to introduce Victor.

The camera then pulls back, away from the wall, revealing the office of Victor. He's sat at his desk, lit by a cone of light. It's quite dark behind him.

It's Victor's job to count every vote in our elections, and that means he's something of an expert in these things.

Ready to do some explaining, Victor?

He nods. As the VO explains the choices, signs illuminate in the darkness behind his desk.

Great.
So, there are two systems to choose from: 'First past the post' and 'Alternative vote'.
Which one do you want to hear about first?
Click a sign to choose.

<u>Approx 40 secs</u>

2a. FPTP

Victor stands up and walks left. We're now in a new part of the ballot box. The words 'First past the post' are against the wall, and a huge pile of papers sits in a mound on the floor. Victor tumbles in.

Comment [CP1]: I assume this is no longer relevant as we are not in the ballot box?

Comment [CP2]: What do we mean by tumbles? Completely understand we need to give him a bit of character, but need to avoid making the counting process look too shambolic

'First past the post' is the system we currently use in UK general elections; here's how it works.

Victor emerges clutching a vote slip. We cut to see it full screen. There is a list of candidates, A through D. Candidate B is marked with a cross.

With 'First past the post', you vote for one candidate. You do this by putting a cross into the box of the person you want to vote for.

We cut back to the room. Victor is busily counting votes from the pile, his tongue poked out in concentration.

The votes for each candidate are then put into a pile and counted.

We flash forward. The votes are now all counted in four tall piles against the wall. Candidate A's pile is tallest.

When the counting is finished the candidate with the most votes wins.

Victor extends a tape measure and verifies Candidate A, nodding.

A candidate doesn't need to get a minimum number of votes – to win they only need more votes than any other candidate.

He pins a rosette on candidate A's pile, and walks right to return to his desk.

Thank you, Victor!

Victor is back behind his desk. The two signs – 'FPTP' and 'AV' - are illuminated behind him, and a new sign has appeared on the front of his desk. It reads 'I'm done'.

So, did you understand first past the post?
Victor nods.

Not you, Victor, our voter!
If you do understand, click 'Alternative Vote' to find out about the other voting system.
If you don't, click the 'First past the post' sign to play this clip again.
And, if you're happy that you understand both systems, just click 'I'm done'.
Approx 55secs (total 1min 35secs)

2b. AV

Victor stands up and walks right. We're now in a new part of the ballot box. The words 'Alternative Vote' are marked on the wall, and a heap of votes swing from the ceiling in a cargo net.

The 'Alternative vote' system is different to the way we currently vote in UK general elections; here's how it works.

Victor releases the votes on to the floor, accidentally burying himself. He pops up, clutching a slip, and we cut to see it full screen. Again we see a list of candidates, A through D, but they are now marked with numbers. B is 1, A is 2, C is 3 and D is 4.

In this system, you use numbers to rank the candidates in order of your preference. You put a 1 next to your first choice, 2 next to your second choice, 3 next to your third choice and so on.

You can choose how many candidates to rank. You don't have to rank every candidate. As long as you rank at least one, your vote will be counted.

We cut back to the room. Victor is busily counting the vote slips around him into tidy piles.

The number 1 votes for each candidate are then put into a pile and counted.
Off you go, Victor!

Flash forward. All of the votes are now counted into four tall piles against the wall. Candidates A & B are joint tallest.

When the counting is finished, if a candidate has received more than half the number 1 votes, that candidate wins and there is no further counting.

A dashed line draws across the wall. It is labeled '50% of number 1 votes', and sits well above all of the piles.

But, if no candidate has received more than half the number 1 votes, it means there will be at least one more round of counting. So, since no one has enough votes in our example, Victor can start round 2.

Victor walks over and attempts to lift the smallest pile of votes – candidate D.

At this point, the candidate with the fewest number 1 votes is removed from the contest - in this case, Candidate D.

With a good heave, he lifts the whole pile and carries it out of shot.

Each ballot paper in Candidate D's pile is then looked at again.

Two ballot papers slide in front of the screen, one in each of Victor's hands. The number 1 vote on both (both for candidate D) is crossed out. One has a number 2 (B) and number 3 vote (A) on it. The other has no other votes.

If the ballot paper shows a number 2 vote for another candidate, it is added to that candidate's pile. For example, this ballot paper shows a number 1 vote for Candidate D and number 2 vote for Candidate B, so it will be moved to Candidate B's pile.

The number 2 vote for Candidate B is circled.

If a ballot paper does not show a number 2 vote, it is no longer used.

The paper with no more votes on it is striked through. Victor's hand then lowers the removed ballot paper from the frame.

We then fade back to the room. Victor jumps into fast-forward, and the three remaining piles grow as Victor zips between them in a blur. As each pile grows, a coloured section appears on top of the existing votes, showing where the moved votes have ended up.

The 50% marker on the wall now reads '50% of remaining votes'.

The fast forward stops as Victor is reaching up on his tip-toes to add the last of the redistributed votes to candidate A's pile. A & B are no longer the same height, and A now has a small lead.

If a candidate has received more than half of the remaining votes, that candidate has won and the counting stops.

But in this case there is still no candidate with more than half of the remaining votes, so another round of counting is needed.

Away you go, Victor!

Once more, Victor goes to lift the smallest pile (Candidate C).

Again, the candidate with the fewest votes is taken out of the contest. This time it's Candidate C.

As this pile is taller than the last one he lifted, his knees knock and he strains to lift it. Puffing and panting with wobbly legs, he carries the pile out of frame.

Each ballot paper on Candidate C's pile is looked at again to see if any of the remaining candidates are ranked.

Like before, two ballot papers slide in front of the screen, one in each of Victor's hands. Both have their number 1 and number 2 votes crossed out (C&D). One paper has a number 3 vote for Candidate A. The other has no more votes on it.

If so, the ballot paper is moved to the pile of the candidate ranked highest on that ballot paper.

The number 3 vote for Candidate A is circled.

If none of the remaining candidates are ranked the ballot paper is no longer used.

The other ballot paper is striked through. Victor's hand then pulls the removed slip out of frame.

We then fade back to the room again. . Victor jumps into fast-forward again, and the two remaining piles grow as Victor zips between them in a blur. As each pile grows, another coloured section appears on top of the existing votes, showing where the moved votes have ended up.

The fast-forward stops and Victor is now on a ladder, reaching to put the last of the redistributed votes on top of the Candidate A's pile. It has broken the 50% line on the wall.

We have a winner! Candidate A now has half the remaining votes.

Victor pins a rosette on Candidate A's pile.

Of course, this is just one example. If more candidates are involved, this process can be repeated until one candidate has more than half the remaining votes.

He slides down his ladder like a pro, and walks off screen to the left.

Thank you Victor!

Back behind his desk, Victor nods. The two signs are illuminated behind him, and the front of his desk still reads 'I'm Done'.

Hopefully you now understand 'Alternative Vote'.
If you do, click 'First past the post to find out about the other voting system.
If you don't, click the 'Alternative Vote' sign to play this clip again.
And, if you're happy that you understand both systems, just click 'I'm done'.

<u>Approx 1min 55secs (total: 3min 30 secs)</u>

Comment [CP3]: Not sure about this – implies that the only ones looked at are those that have been redistributed from D's pile in first round. Can one be like this (and show a third preference for another candidate) and one have C as the first preference and A or B as the second. Don't need to show another example of a ballot paper that would be removed.

Comment [CP4]: So, following on from the above – can we have the two ballot papers still shown. Once will have a first preference for D, a second preference for C and a third preference for A (as per current plans). The other will have a first preference for C and a second preference for B (and maybe a third for D but no fourth).

Comment [CP5]: As per above – would rather show the two ballot papers still in play as outlined above rather than show another example of one being removed – still need to say the 'if none of the remaining candidates are ranked' line though

Comment [CP6]: Should say 'more than half'

3. END

Cropping in closer to Victor behind his desk, we can no longer see the signs in the background. He wipes his brow and 'phews'.

So, now we've explained the voting systems, what happens when you go to vote on May 5th?

Victor produces the referendum ballot paper from his desk, and holds it forward so it fills the screen.

You'll receive a ballot paper with this question:

"At present, the UK uses the first past the post' system to elect MPs to the House of Commons. Should the 'alternative vote' system be used instead?"

Vote 'yes' if you think alternative vote should be used. Vote 'no' if you think first past the post should be used.

Victor removes the ballot paper and puts it back in his desk, smiling.

That's it! Thanks for your help Victor.

Cutting back to the wide view, the signs have been replaced with the words 'aboutmyvote.co.uk'

If you'd like to know more, visit aboutmyvote.co.uk. Thanks for watching.

The slot spotlight clicks off, leaving the words 'aboutmyvote.co.uk' visible on a black screen, as 'Polling stations open 7am-10pm' fades in beneath.

Victor's eyes are left blinking in the darkness - he 'humphs', and we hear his footsteps as he walks out of frame. A replay button appears, and the film finishes.

<u>Approx 30 secs (total: 4mins 5secs)</u>

Comment [CP7]: Will need to show the 'yes' and 'no' words and boxes on the ballot paper as well. We can give examples of how the real ballot paper will look to base the design on

Comment [CP8]: Can we say something like: For more information on voting visit www.aboutmyvote.co.uk '. Just don't want to imply more info on the voting systems as there as this and booklet are pretty much it (and the booklet all the same content)