

Overview

# Regulated Periods for political parties: Elections in May 2016

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This document is for political parties  
campaigning at elections being held on  
5 May 2016

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## Translations and other formats

For information on obtaining this publication in another language or in a large-print or Braille version, please contact us:

Tel: 020 7271 0500

Email: [publications@electoralcommission.org.uk](mailto:publications@electoralcommission.org.uk)

## Terms and expressions we use

You will normally be doing enough to comply with the law if you follow this guidance.

We use '**must**' when we refer to a specific requirement. We use '**should**' for items we consider to be minimum good practice, but which are not legal or regulatory requirements.

## Our approach to enforcement

The Commission regulates political funding and spending. We are committed to providing those we regulate with a clear understanding of their regulatory obligations through our guidance documents and advice service.

Wherever possible, we use advice and guidance proactively in order to secure compliance. And we regulate in a way that is effective, proportionate and fair.

If you do not comply with legal or regulatory requirements you or your organisation may be subject to civil or criminal sanctions. You can find more information about the Commission's approach to enforcement at [www.electoralcommission.org.uk/party-finance/enforcement](http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/party-finance/enforcement)



# Regulated periods for political parties: Elections in May 2016

## This document explains:

The regulated periods for political parties contesting elections taking place in May 2016 who need to know when the spending limits and rules apply. This document covers both Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

## The document covers:

- elections taking place in May 2016
- the regulated periods and dates that apply
- where to find more information

## Related documents:

- [Scottish Parliamentary election May 2016: Political parties](#)
- [National Assembly of Wales May 2016: Political parties](#)
- [Northern Ireland Assembly May 2016: Political parties](#)
- [Overview of party campaign spending](#)
- [Expert paper: Splitting Spending](#)

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## Summary

Under the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 (PPERA) there are rules on spending and fundraising that political parties have to follow in the run-up to elections.

Different elections have different spending limits, and these limits can apply for different periods of time.

This document provides an overview for political parties of the regulated periods and when they apply for elections taking place on 5 May 2016.

# About our guidance

Each year, we publish specific guidance for political parties for the elections taking place in that year. These documents cover:

- the spending limits that apply for each election
- the periods that these limits apply for
- the reporting deadlines for each election

When preparing to contest an election, you should read both the specific guidance for the election you are contesting, as well as the general guidance documents on topics that apply to all elections.

You can find our election specific guidance documents on our [website](#). In 2016 we have produced election specific guidance for the following elections:

- [Scottish Parliamentary election](#)
- [National Assembly of Wales election](#)
- [Northern Ireland Assembly election](#)

This guidance applies to political parties only. We issue separate guidance for candidates and their agents, which you can find [here](#):

[Guidance for candidates and agents](#)

## Important

For information on the following elections, please refer to our candidate guidance:

- [Local elections in England](#)
- [Greater London Authority elections](#)
- [Police and Crime Commissioner elections in England.](#)

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## What is the regulated period?

In the run up to some elections, there is a set time where campaign spending limits and rules apply for political parties. We call this time the regulated period.

Regulated periods apply at elections to:

- the European Parliament
- the UK Parliament
- the Scottish Parliament
- the National Assembly for Wales
- the Northern Ireland Assembly

UK Parliamentary general elections usually have a regulated period of 365 days ending on the day of the election.

All of the other elections usually have a regulated period of 4 months.

## Referendum on membership of the European Union

The referendum on the United Kingdom's membership of the European Union is scheduled to take place by the end of 2017 but a date has not been confirmed. There will be a time in the run up to the referendum when rules on campaign spending and donations and loans will apply to campaigners campaigning on the referendum. We call this the referendum period.

Depending on the date of the referendum, it is possible that the referendum period may overlap with the regulated period for the elections being held on 5 May 2016. If this happens, we

Spending at local authority and Police and crime Commissioner elections is only covered by party campaign spending rules if it falls within the regulated period of one of the elections in the list.

In 2016, party spending on Police and Crime Commissioner elections in **Wales** will be covered by the rules.



will issue further guidance to explain the impact of the overlapping periods for parties and campaigners who are campaigning at both the referendum and the May 2016 elections.

Spending on campaigning at referendums is regulated separately from campaigning at elections. If you intend to spend more than £10,000 campaigning at the referendum, you will need to register with us as a referendum campaigner.

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## Elections in 2016

The following elections are taking place on 5 May 2016:

- the Scottish Parliament
- the National Assembly for Wales
- the Northern Ireland Assembly
- local elections in England
- Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) elections in England and Wales
- Greater London Authority (including London Mayoral) elections

There is a regulated period for political parties at the following elections:

- the Scottish Parliament
- the National Assembly for Wales
- the Northern Ireland Assembly

Our election specific guidance is available here:

- [Scottish Parliamentary election May 2016: Political parties](#)
- [National Assembly of Wales May 2016: Political parties](#)
- [Northern Ireland Assembly May 2016: Political parties](#)

## Local government elections in England

Local government elections are also taking place on 5 May 2016 in some parts of England.

We issue separate guidance for candidates and their agents. You can find it on our [website](#).

There is no regulated period for political parties campaigning at local elections in England in 2016. However any spending which can be attributed to promoting the electoral success of a specific candidate rather than the party and is authorised by the candidate's agent must be reported by the candidate's agent.

## Police and Crime Commissioner elections

Police and Crime Commissioner (PPC) elections are also taking place on 5 May 2016 in England and Wales.

Party spending on the PCC elections in Wales during the regulated period for political parties must be reported as campaign expenditure for the National Assembly for Wales election.

Party spending on the PCC elections in England during the regulated period that promotes the candidate and is authorised by the candidate's agent must be reported in the candidate's spending return.



Important

## Greater London Authority Elections

Greater London Authority elections (including London Mayoral) are also taking place on 5 May 2016.

There is no regulated period for political parties campaigning in the Greater London Authority elections in 2016. Any campaigning that takes place on behalf of a candidate will be counted against the candidate spending limit.

Any spending which promotes the party in general in the GLA elections counts towards the spending total for the party list candidates.

You can find out more about the candidate spending rules for the GLA election [here](#).

# The regulated period

In the run up to certain elections, there is a set time when the rules on spending and donations apply. We call this time the 'regulated period'. The rules will differ, depending on which election is being held.

The regulated periods for 2016 are set out in the table below:

<b>Election</b>	<b>Start of regulated period</b>	<b>End of regulated period</b>
Scottish Parliament	5 January 2016	5 May 2016
National Assembly for Wales	5 January 2016	5 May 2016
Northern Ireland Assembly	5 January 2016	5 May 2016

# Where to find more information

If you are contesting the 2016 elections, you will find the following resources useful: [2016 calendar: Reporting dates for political parties](#)

## Election specific documents:

Our election specific guidance provides information on the regulated periods, spending limits and reporting requirements for each election.

- [Scottish Parliamentary election May 2016: Political parties](#)
- [National Assembly of Wales May 2016: Political parties](#)
- [Northern Ireland Assembly May 2016; Political parties](#)

## Managing your campaign spending

It is important to manage your campaign spending effectively as you must not exceed the spending limit and because you must report the details of your spending to us after the election. Our guidance on managing campaign spending is available here: [Overview of party campaign spending](#)

Once you have a good understanding of the principles of campaign spending, our guidance on splitting campaign spending provides more detailed information about how to split spending between elections: [Expert paper: Splitting Spending](#)

## How we can help

You can find more information in the guidance documents we have suggested in this document, or you can view our full range of guidance and up-to-date resources on our website.

If it's easier, you can also contact us on one of the phone numbers or email addresses below. We are here to help, so please get in touch.

Call us on:

- England: 0333 103 1928  
[pef@electoralcommission.org.uk](mailto:pef@electoralcommission.org.uk)
- Scotland: 0333 103 1928  
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Visit us at [www.electoralcommission.org.uk](http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk)

We welcome feedback on our guidance – just email us at:  
[pef@electoralcommission.org.uk](mailto:pef@electoralcommission.org.uk)