

The  
Electoral  
Commission

Corporate  
Plan for  
Wales  
2022/23 -  
2026/27



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# Foreword



Working with others, we constantly strive to improve the electoral system for the benefit of voters, campaigners and electoral administrators.

This five-year Corporate Plan has been prepared and is submitted pursuant to paragraph 16B of Schedule 1 to the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000. It covers the Electoral Commission's activities in Wales for the period 2022/23 to 2026/27, and replaces and develops our interim plan put in place after the December 2019 UK general election.

The Electoral Commission works independent from governments to promote public confidence in the electoral system, ensuring the integrity of elections and the legitimacy of their results. We aim to deliver our responsibilities impartially, ensuring independence of thinking and decision making that can be trusted.

We have UK wide responsibilities, are accountable to the UK Parliament, the Senedd and the Scottish Parliament, and our work is directed to meeting the needs of each of the four parts of the UK.

Our statutory responsibilities are integral to the electoral system – whether regulating political finance laws; providing oversight, guidance, or support on the delivery of elections; supporting voters to engage with the democratic process with confidence; or providing evidence and insights to inform future improvement. Working with others, we constantly strive to improve the electoral system for the benefit of voters, campaigners and electoral administrators.

Elections in both Wales and the UK as a whole are well-run. Our survey work shows very high levels of public satisfaction in the processes in place for voters to register and cast their votes. We also have one of the most transparent systems of political finance in the world. However, there are pressures on the whole electoral system which need our attention.

We will continue to seek to remove barriers that deter people from registering or casting their vote. Alongside our ongoing activities to encourage voter registration and protect against electoral fraud, we will work to retain voter confidence in political campaigning as it evolves.

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# Foreword continued



We look forward to working constructively with the Welsh Government, Senedd, other UK governments and parliaments, parties and campaigners, electoral administrators and other interested groups to maintain voter confidence in our electoral system.

We will support parties and campaigners to comply with the law, while continuing to ensure political finance is transparent. We will support local authorities to meet the significant economic, social and environmental challenges they face in delivering well-run electoral services. We will also support electoral administrators to adapt to the increasingly diverse approach to the way elections are delivered, brought about by devolution and the changing needs of voters.

During the period of this plan, we will work with others to secure changes in the law and in the operation of the electoral system that will ensure it is resilient to changes in society. Critical to this will be taking on board advances in digital technology, seeking sustainable solutions and improving the coherence and efficiency of how organisations involved in the electoral system work together.

Underpinning the plan is the requirement to provide value for money and maintain a well-run organisation. The plan incorporates a renewed focus on equality, diversity and inclusion, and is designed to encourage staff engagement, development of skills and use of the technology required to support effective ways of working and continuous learning and improvement.

We look forward to working constructively with the Welsh Government, Senedd, other UK governments and parliaments, parties and campaigners, electoral administrators and other interested groups to maintain voter confidence in our electoral system.

**John Pullinger**  
Chair

**Dame Elan Closs  
Stephens CBE**  
Electoral  
Commissioner  
- Wales

**Bob Posner**  
Chief Executive and  
Accounting Officer

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# 1. The electoral system

The electoral system enables democracy across and within the nations, regions and local areas of the UK by:

- encouraging people to register to vote, and to trust and value elections and referendums
- achieving high levels of compliance with registration, reporting and other political finance laws
- ensuring the delivery of free and fair elections and referendums

A range of bodies operate within the electoral system to enable it to function efficiently and effectively. These include:

- the Senedd and Welsh Government
- the UK Parliament and Government
- candidates, parties and campaigners
- local electoral services led by the Electoral Registration Officers and Returning Officers, who are responsible for directly delivering elections throughout Wales and the UK, and the Wales Electoral Coordination Board
- The Electoral Commission which has specific duties related to the oversight of elections, running referendums and the regulation of political finance, along with other bodies that have regulatory and law enforcement responsibilities relating to elections

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## Scheduled elections in Wales in the period April 2022 to March 2027:

### May 2022

- Welsh Local Government

### May 2024

- UK Parliamentary
- Police and Crime Commissioners (England and Wales)

### May 2026

- Senedd

# 2. The Electoral Commission

The table below summarises the key factors which guide and shape the work of the Electoral Commission:

<b>Vision</b>	People trust, value and take part in elections
<b>Purpose</b>	<p>The Electoral Commission is the independent body which oversees elections and regulates political finance in the UK.</p> <p>We work to promote public confidence in the electoral system and ensure its integrity.</p>
<b>Key benefits</b>	<p>Increased trust</p> <p>Increased value</p> <p>Increased participation</p>
<b>Strategic objectives</b>	<p><b>Objectives:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• accessible registration and voting</li> <li>• transparent political campaigning and compliant political finance</li> <li>• resilient local electoral services</li> <li>• fair and effective electoral law</li> <li>• a modern and sustainable electoral system</li> </ul> <p><b>Three key factors will help us achieve our objectives:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• we demonstrate independence and integrity</li> <li>• we are a skilled organisation where diversity is valued</li> <li>• we are a learning organisation where improvement is continuous and resources are used effectively</li> </ul>
<b>Values</b>	<p>Engaged</p> <p>Authoritative</p> <p>Making an impact</p> <p>Transparent</p> <p>Independent</p>



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# The Electoral Commission continued



We work to promote public confidence in the electoral system and ensure its integrity.

## Our purpose

The Electoral Commission is the independent body which oversees elections and regulates political finance in the UK.

We work to promote public confidence in the electoral system and ensure its integrity.

## Our strategic objectives

Our five strategic objectives for the period April 2022 to March 2027 are:

### 1. Accessible registration and voting

Free and fair elections depend on all people who are eligible and want to vote being able to do so. We will work to ensure:

- increased levels of voter registration, especially amongst groups that currently have difficulty engaging in the process
- the removal of barriers, especially those that affect people who currently have difficulty trying to cast their vote

We will achieve these outcomes by working collaboratively with policy makers and other partners to identify barriers to participation and propose solutions. We will directly support people who have difficulty engaging in the process, with tailored accessible information and learning resources, and targeted public awareness activity. We outline our plans to support accessible registration and voting in Section 3 of this Corporate Plan.

### 2. Transparent political campaigning and compliant political finance

Parties and other campaigners should be able to campaign without facing undue actual or perceived barriers, while we continue to ensure political finance is transparent. This will support voters to hear a range of campaign voices to help them take decisions when voting. We will work to ensure:

- increased levels of confidence shown by candidates, parties and other campaigners in their ability to understand, apply and comply with the law on campaigning and political finance
- high levels of compliance with registration, reporting and other political finance laws

We will achieve these aims by maintaining the official registers for parties and campaigners, and ensuring political finance data is accessible, transparent and complete. We will provide guidance and support for all types of campaigners and make regulatory decisions which command the confidence of candidates, parties, campaigners, and voters. We outline our plans for transparent political campaigning and compliant political finance in Section 4 of this Corporate Plan.

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# The Electoral Commission continued

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It is essential for the electoral system that the laws which underpin it are fair, effective and well understood.

### 3. Resilient local electoral services

Local electoral services need to be able to respond to increasingly challenging economic, social and environmental pressures. We will support local authorities and electoral administrators to deliver effective, sustainable and resilient electoral services, ensuring that voters receive the service they should be able to expect. We will work to ensure:

- sustained and consistent high performance in the delivery of well-run elections
- increased levels of confidence shown by electoral administrators in the resilience of the electoral system

We will achieve these aims by setting challenging standards for electoral administrators, and providing guidance and support to ensure they are met. We will work collaboratively with local authorities, national bodies, the Welsh Government and Senedd, and other UK governments and parliaments to build resilience into the electoral system. We outline our plans to ensure resilient local electoral services in Section 5 of this Corporate Plan.

### 4. Fair and effective electoral law

It is essential for the electoral system that the laws which underpin it are fair, effective and well understood. Electoral law must also keep pace with other developments in our society, harnessing technology and working on a continual process of modernisation. We will work to:

- support the Welsh Government and Senedd, and other UK governments and parliaments to reform electoral law to make it less complex
- reduce the risks and inefficiencies associated with electoral law which impact our electoral system

We will achieve this aim by continuing to research and understand how electoral law could be reformed to help voters, campaigners, electoral administrators, and other organisations. We will also continue to provide expert advice on the practicability and impact of any changes to improve the electoral system. We outline our plans to work towards fair and effective electoral law in Section 6 of this Corporate Plan.

## 5. A modern and sustainable electoral system

The electoral system needs to be resilient to the challenges that lie in and beyond the period of this plan. It needs to modernise to maintain and improve value for money, transparency, trust and compliance. And, it needs to reduce its environmental impact to be sustainable. We will work to ensure:

- data and technology are harnessed to meet the needs of voters, campaigners and electoral administrators
- the changing risks to the election system from the misuse of data and technology are understood and acted upon
- strong relationships and streamlined working practices with all bodies that are part of the electoral system are developed
- the Welsh Government, other UK governments and the wider electoral community are supported to adopt a strategy and implementation plan which reduces the environmental impact of our electoral system

We will achieve these aims by working with others to explore and implement new ways to use data and technology across the electoral system. We will also continue to monitor, advise and act on the misuse of data and technology. We will develop a strategy and implementation plan which reduces the environmental impact of the electoral system, to include innovative evidence-based solutions. We outline our plans to work towards a modern and sustainable electoral system in Section 7 of this Corporate Plan. We also outline our plans to make our organisation carbon neutral, consistent with governments' targets, in Section 8.

## Underpinning this work

Three key factors will make a difference to how we achieve these strategic objectives:

### **1. We demonstrate independence and integrity**

To fulfil its duties, it is essential that an electoral commission remains independent from governments, and acts impartially and with integrity. We will continue to demonstrate how we fulfil this by:

- taking decisions on the evidence and being transparent about the reasons for them
- basing our policy positions and recommendations on analysis of evidence
- effectively communicating our work and views
- providing responsive services to those we support
- maintaining effective governance arrangements

### **2. We are a skilled organisation where diversity is valued**

We work hard to ensure our people feel part of a diverse, inclusive and supportive workplace. In the next five years we will:

- implement refreshed working practices to reflect wider changes in our work environment and culture
- attract, retain and develop the people we need
- maintain and improve high standards of management, with a focus on developing our people
- further embed equality, diversity and inclusion in all aspects of our work

### **3. We are a learning organisation where improvement is continuous and resources are used efficiently**

We are committed to utilising technology, funding, time and resources to deliver maximum value. We will invest in our systems and in reducing our environmental impact.

In the next five years we will:

- procure and implement value for money technology that improves service delivery as appropriate
- maintain a sound prudent financial strategy
- continue to develop techniques to learn from experience, seek continuous improvement and become more efficient and effective
- develop a corporate environmental strategy that meets policy and legislative requirements

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# 3. Putting voters first



Public awareness of the electoral system is key to voter engagement and confidence.

To have a healthy democracy, voters need to be engaged in our electoral process, and confident that elections are free and fair. We will work to increase voter engagement and confidence in Wales and the wider UK by:

- raising public awareness of the electoral process
- removing barriers to registering and voting
- ensuring laws for parties and campaigners are clear and followed
- ensuring the electoral system works effectively

## **Raising public awareness**

Public awareness of the electoral system – including how to register and vote – is key to voter engagement and confidence. Our research demonstrates that public awareness of how to register and vote is currently high. In February 2021, 93% of those surveyed (both in Wales and UK wide) as part of our annual public opinion tracking survey stated they knew how to register to vote, and 92% were confident they knew how to cast their vote. It is important that we continue to maintain and increase this awareness, and we will continue to refine and deliver effective public awareness activity ahead of elections in Wales and other parts of the UK. We will ensure the information we provide to voters is accessible and transparent, keeping pace with developments in digital communications, and ensuring our public information services are tailored to voters' needs.

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## Putting voters first continued

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We will develop and expand our learning work, producing political literacy resources to help people understand how to get involved in our democracy. We will continue to undertake public awareness campaigns and work with the wider electoral community and partner organisations. Following the extension of the franchise to 16 and 17 year olds and foreign nationals resident in Wales, we will continue to work to ensure new voters understand their eligibility and can confidently participate in the 2022 local government elections and 2026 Senedd election.

We will also continue to work alongside all relevant partners to promote greater consistency in political education, and increase political knowledge and understanding amongst young people to ensure they can fully engage in our democratic system in Wales. This will include developing the good work already achieved with the publication of education resources and the further development of an education and learning programme in Wales.

### **Removing barriers to registering and voting**

Our research shows that the current electoral system could be improved to meet the needs of all eligible voters. Results from our 2021 UK wide public opinion tracking survey show that people with a disability are more likely to be dissatisfied with the process of voting (10%) than those without a disability (6%). We already know what many of the barriers people experience are, but we will do further work to identify issues with registering and voting, and will then take action to address them. We will broaden the range of third sector organisations we work with to understand the challenges, and will collaborate with policy makers and other partners to identify solutions. This includes influencing the development of new policies, to ensure additional barriers are not introduced. We will deliver effective targeted voter awareness activities for the groups identified, and will specifically support under-registered groups to engage in the democratic process. We will also continue to explore the feasibility of modernising the voting process itself, aware of the changing needs of voters in our digital age.

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## Putting voters first continued

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### **Ensuring laws for parties and campaigners are clear and followed**

The legitimacy of elections is dependent on clear laws which are understood and respected by parties and campaigners. We will ensure voters have accessible information about parties and campaigners participating in elections, including transparency on how they are funded and what they spend. We will raise public awareness of the rules on party and campaigner registration, donations, and campaign spending, and will help voters take action if they see something which concerns them. We will continue to maintain the official registers of parties and non-party campaigners, and will seek to remove barriers to campaigning to ensure that voters hear from a wide and diverse range of campaigners. We will improve voter access to our Political Finance Online database by updating and upgrading the search functionality. Where political financial data is incomplete, we will continue to enforce the law to ensure transparency and increased voter confidence in the system. We provide more details on how we will support parties and campaigners to comply with the law in Section 4 of this Corporate Plan.

### **Ensuring the electoral system works effectively**

Key to voter confidence is an electoral system that works effectively. People should be confident elections are well-run, and should trust in the legitimacy of the results. Our 2021 public opinion tracking survey showed that 75% of people in Wales are confident that elections are well-run (compared to 80% UK wide). We will continue to conduct significant research to report on how elections have been run, including detailed understanding of voters' experiences. This will enable us to raise concerns and make evidence-based recommendations where appropriate, with the ultimate aim of maintaining public confidence in the electoral system. We outline our plans to ensure the delivery of free and fair elections in Section 5, including our work to support resilient local electoral services.

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# 4. Supporting and securing campaigner compliance with the law

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Electoral law is complicated, but understanding and applying it should not be a barrier to those who want to campaign.

Campaigners being able to get their messages to voters is a fundamental part of the democratic process. Campaigners, including parties, must be able to communicate with voters to explain their views and policies, so that voters are informed when they vote. And it's important that voters hear from a wide and diverse variety of campaigners.

So campaigners must be able to campaign without facing undue actual or perceived barriers, while we continue to ensure political finance is transparent. We will improve the transparency of political campaigning, and help parties and campaigners to comply with the law, by:

- ensuring campaigners can access support to understand the law in the way and at the time that works best for them
- ensuring political finance laws are enforced fairly, working with law enforcement and other regulators
- publishing complete and accurate political finance data
- providing insights to campaigners and parliaments on how campaigning methods directly affect voter confidence in elections

## **Ensuring campaigners can access support to understand the law in the way and at the time that works best for them**

Electoral law is complicated, but understanding and applying it should not be a barrier to those who want to campaign. We will work to ensure that campaigners can get on with campaigning, and examine barriers – both real and perceived – which prevent people who want to campaign from doing so. We will use these insights to ensure our guidance and other support tools work well for all campaigners no matter their financial size or experience.



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## Supporting and securing campaigner compliance with the law continued

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We will also complete and consolidate the strategic shift in the way we approach regulation outlined in our last Interim Corporate Plan, putting greater emphasis on tools to promote compliance. We will launch our new Political Finance Online database, continue to develop our proactive support for campaigners, transition to an intelligence-led approach to monitoring, and embed an effective regulatory insights and horizon-scanning process. We will also work with our partners to provide cybersecurity advice to parties and campaigners.

We will work closely with the Welsh Government to update the statutory Codes of Practice on election spending prior to the 2026 Senedd election, if necessary. We will ensure they reflect any changes to the law that are made. We will also support the Welsh Government with considering other future changes to the law, such as the potential introduction of digital imprints.

We will also continue to work with Senedd officials as they draft the new reporting rules and processes to enable the rules to be adopted and dual reporting brought to an end. The Standards and Business Committees in the Fifth Senedd agreed that dual reporting will be brought to an end in Wales and that elected members will only be required to report to the Senedd.

### **Ensuring political finance laws are enforced fairly, working with law enforcement and other regulators**

Parties, other campaigners and voters want confidence that political finance laws are enforced proportionately, consistently, and impartially. We will continue to conduct investigations, and be transparent about the outcomes of all our work.

We will ensure the way we respond to electoral fraud is as effective as it can be, and will provide support and advice to regulators and law enforcement.

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## Supporting and securing campaigner compliance with the law continued

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### **Publishing complete and accurate political finance data**

Compliance with the political finance reporting laws is already high. We will work to make compliance even higher, by introducing compliance tools that work for a range of campaigners, and through proportionate and impartial enforcement of the law.

In Section 3, we noted our plans to make political finance data more accessible for voters. Our new Political Finance Online database will also be an important tool for campaigners, making reporting easier and faster. We will work to ensure consistent timely publication of financial data from parties, candidates and campaigners.

### **Providing insights to campaigners and parliaments on how campaigning methods directly affect voter confidence in elections**

In Section 3, we noted our plans to help voters understand the rules on campaigning, with the aim of increasing confidence in elections. Another way we aim to increase voter confidence is by providing evidence-based insights to campaigners and parliaments to ensure they better understand the impact that different campaigning methods have on the way voters perceive elections and their results. We will also provide support and advice on new and developing campaigning methods.

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# 5. Supporting local electoral services delivery and resilience



We will set and ensure compliance with challenging performance standards.

Local electoral services face significant economic, social and environmental challenges which risk impacting on their ability to deliver well-run elections and referendums. We will help local authorities and electoral administrators in Wales and the wider UK to respond to these pressures. We will work to support the consistent delivery of high-quality services for voters, and the development of resilient local electoral services by:

- setting challenging performance standards for local electoral services
- providing accessible guidance and support for electoral administrators
- supporting increased resilience of local electoral services
- ensuring the electoral system works effectively

## **Setting challenging performance standards for local electoral services**

We will continue to support Returning Officers to deliver the elections scheduled to take place during the period of this Corporate Plan, and remain prepared to respond to unscheduled polls if required to do so. We will also support Electoral Registration Officers to deliver electoral registration services, including the annual canvass in Wales, for each year of this Corporate Plan.

We will set and ensure compliance with challenging performance standards. We will provide guidance and advice to help electoral administrators meet the standards and challenge them when we identify areas for improvement. We will review the performance standards framework for Returning Officers to further enhance its role in identifying and driving performance improvements, and providing accountability for the elections they deliver.

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## Supporting local electoral services delivery and resilience continued

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### **Providing accessible guidance and support for electoral administrators**

We published accessible digital guidance for Electoral Registration Officers in May 2021 to support the delivery of the first reformed annual canvass in Wales and the other nations of Great Britain. We are working to ensure all guidance for Returning Officers, candidates and agents is published in this accessible format on our website, and we will continue to refresh this guidance on an election-by-election basis. We seek the views of electoral administrators after set of elections, and over three-quarters of administrators that responded to our survey after the May 2021 elections told us they had found our guidance very or fairly useful. We will continue to seek feedback from and consult with electoral administrators to ensure our guidance meets their needs. We will continue to provide in person and telephone support, to help electoral administrators in their work.

### **Supporting increased resilience of local electoral services**

Our research and the feedback we gather from electoral administrators after each set of elections tells us about the pressures on the electoral system that are currently being experienced at the local level. In response we will develop and deliver a programme of activity to support resilient electoral services. We will work collaboratively with electoral administrators to understand the challenges they face and identify solutions to address them. We will implement agreed measures to build resilience, working in partnership with local authorities and the wider electoral community to ensure maximum impact. We will also explore how data on the costs of electoral services can be collected and used to identify and drive efficiencies in the delivery of electoral processes.

### **Ensuring the electoral system works effectively**

Electoral administrators need confidence that the electoral system works effectively. We will continue to conduct research to report on how elections have been run, including to secure a detailed understanding of electoral administrators' experiences. This will enable us to raise concerns and make evidence-based recommendations where appropriate, ensuring electoral administrators have confidence in the electoral system as a whole.

We will continue to work closely with and support the work of the Wales Electoral Coordination Board which is in a key position to lead on the delivery of electoral events and activity in Wales. We continue to recommend that this group should become a statutory board similar to the Electoral Management Board in Scotland. This, we believe, will not only assist with the effective planning of electoral events in Wales but also will ensure greater resilience of the electoral system.

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# 6. Making sure electoral law is fair and effective



We will continue to scrutinise new electoral legislation and provide expert briefings to governments and parliaments on legislative proposals.

Our electoral system is underpinned by a legal framework which establishes how elections are delivered. It sets out who is allowed to vote and the various ways they can cast their vote. It sets out who can stand for elections, who can campaign, and how much they can spend. And it sets out how electoral administrators should deliver elections, including counting and declaring the results.

Given its cross cutting impact, we want to work with parliamentarians and governments to improve electoral law so that it is fit for purpose, reduces complexity, inefficiencies and risk, and enables innovation. We will work with others to reform electoral law by:

- supporting effective consideration and implementation of legislation in the Senedd and the UK and Scottish parliaments
- engaging with governments' current electoral law reform agendas, while continuing to make the case for further reform
- continuing to provide expert advice on the practicability and impact of any changes which could be made to improve the electoral system

## **Supporting effective consideration and implementation of legislation in the Senedd and the UK and Scottish parliaments**

We will continue to scrutinise new electoral legislation and provide expert briefings to the Welsh Government and the Senedd, and to other UK governments and parliaments on legislative proposals. We will focus on providing an evidence-based analysis of any proposed changes to electoral law, to support informed consideration of any changes.

We will also work to support effective implementation of any new legislation, ensuring that voters, electoral administrators and campaigners understand what it means for them in each case.

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## Making sure electoral law is fair and effective continued

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We will work closely with the Welsh Government and the Senedd as they develop legislation for Welsh elections. This may include reform ahead of the next local government elections in May 2022, a wider local government elections Bill and reform of Senedd elections ahead of the 2026 polls. We will provide advice on the practical implementation of proposals which reflect the views of the electoral community.

Through our role in designing forms and our public awareness activity, we will also play a key role in implementing any changes, such as making the postal voting system more accessible. We also expect to play a key role in evaluating and publishing a report on the piloting of any reform measures, which may include early voting centres, mobile polling stations and voting in educational establishments.

### **Engaging with governments' current electoral law reform agendas, while continuing to make the case for further reform**

There is an urgent need for the Welsh Government and other UK governments to simplify and modernise electoral law. It is increasingly complex, which is not just a technical or legal problem. There are real costs and consequences for voters, campaigners and electoral administrators, as well as for the regulators and enforcement bodies which struggle to uphold and enforce the law. The UK's Law Commissions have produced a blueprint for simplified and modernised electoral law, which is supported by us, parliamentary select committees, electoral administrators, electoral lawyers and academics. We will continue to make the case for the implementation of this electoral law reform, while supporting parliamentarians and governments with reform when it happens.

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# Making sure electoral law is fair and effective continued

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## **Continuing to provide expert advice on the practicability and impact of any changes which could be made to improve the electoral system**

We want to maintain high levels of public confidence in the electoral process, including perceptions of the legitimacy of the results. We will continue to research public attitudes to understand how the electoral system could be improved to meet voters' needs. We will also continue to conduct research on the delivery of and participation in elections and referendums, and use this research to identify reforms to electoral law and process that would improve them. We will continue to support governments to successfully implement changes to electoral law, and will provide evidence-based recommendations, expertise and practical advice.

Technological advances in digital campaigning bring new challenges, and we know that lack of transparency is already a concern for voters. Results from our 2021 public opinion tracking survey show that 33% of people in Wales disagree that they can find out who has produced the political information they see online (37% UK wide). And, 37% are concerned about how or why online political adverts are targeted at them (40% UK wide). We will therefore continue support to the Welsh Government and other UK governments to implement our recommendations on digital campaigning, while encouraging further improvements.

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# 7. A modern and sustainable electoral system



Working with others, we will ensure we utilise data and technology to achieve efficiencies in the electoral system, to increase compliance with electoral law, and to provide accessible information to voters.

We need to make sure our electoral system keeps pace with digital developments. We need to capitalise on the scope for greater compliance, transparency and the financial savings technology offers, while working to retain voter confidence in the electoral system. We also need to modernise the electoral system to ensure it is environmentally sustainable. We will work towards a modern and sustainable electoral system by:

- harnessing data and technology to meet the needs of voters, campaigners and electoral administrators
- understanding, calling for action and acting on the changing risks to the election system from the misuse of data and technology
- continuing to build strong relationships and streamlining working practices with all bodies that are part of the electoral system
- supporting governments and the wider electoral community to adopt a strategy and implementation plan which meets environmental standards required of our electoral system

## **Harnessing data and technology to meet the needs of voters, campaigners and electoral administrators**

Data and technology present opportunities for democracy. Working with others, we will ensure we utilise data and technology to achieve efficiencies in the electoral system, to increase compliance with electoral law, and to provide accessible information to voters. We will undertake research to provide an evidence base for how data and technology can be harnessed. We will develop and implement plans to utilise data and technology to meet the needs of voters, campaigners and electoral administrators. We will work with others to implement new practices in the use of data and technology across the electoral system.



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# A modern and sustainable electoral system continued

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## **Understanding, calling for action and acting on the changing risks to the election system from the misuse of data and technology**

Data and technology also present significant risks for democracy. We will work with others to explore and implement new practices in the use of data and technology across the electoral system, to improve the accessibility, security and efficiency of elections in Wales and other parts of the UK. We will also undertake research to understand how data and technology threatens the integrity of elections, paying specific attention to voters' trust in the electoral system as a whole.

## **Continuing to build strong relationships and streamlining working practices with all bodies that are part of the electoral system**

We work closely with other bodies that are part of the electoral system. We know that by working collaboratively we are better equipped to respond to the challenges the electoral system faces. We will continue to strengthen these relationships, including with a number of regulators and law enforcement bodies that play a role in enforcing electoral law. We will also continue to help voters understand who is responsible for specific areas of electoral law, and will work to ensure they know who to contact if they have concerns. We will continue to ensure we work with these other bodies in an efficient way, with the ultimate aim of increasing the impact we and they have in the delivery of an effective and trusted electoral system.

## **Supporting governments and the wider electoral community to adopt a strategy and implementation plan which meets environmental standards required of our electoral system**

Over the life of this plan it will become increasingly important to understand and reduce the environmental impact of the electoral system, ensuring it meets the challenging environmental targets which are likely to be brought into law by the Senedd and the UK's other parliaments. Responding to these targets will also increasingly challenge the local delivery of well-run elections and referendums. We will develop a strategy and implementation plan which seeks to reduce the environmental impact of our electoral system, to include innovative evidence-based solutions. We will work with the Welsh Government, other UK governments and local authorities to identify actions to reduce environmental impact. And, we will keep under review potential solutions which may lead to increased sustainability.

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# 8. Underpinning this work



Given our unique role, our integrity needs to be clear and demonstrable.

The preceding sections of this Corporate Plan summarise the work we will undertake to achieve our five strategic objectives. We will ensure we are equipped as an organisation to meet these objectives, focussing on the key enabling activities summarised below.

## **1. We demonstrate independence and integrity**

The electoral system depends on the Electoral Commission being an independent non-partisan body, and we therefore hold ourselves to high standards of integrity. We work hard to ensure we are respected for our expertise, and that our advice and decision making are free from bias. Given our unique role, our integrity needs to be clear and demonstrable. We will continue to demonstrate our integrity by:

- taking decisions on the evidence and being transparent about the reasons for them
- basing our policy positions and recommendations on analysis of evidence
- effectively communicating our work and views
- providing responsive services to those we support
- maintaining effective governance arrangements

### **Taking decisions on the evidence and being transparent about the reasons for them**

In making decisions, of a regulatory nature or otherwise, we will proceed based on the law, evidence, fairness and proportionality, and in accordance with sound governance processes. Our published policies, such as our Corporate Governance Framework and Enforcement Policy, provide a clear understanding of how we operate and make decisions. Wherever and to the extent it is appropriate for us to provide reasons for decisions we will do so, including in accordance with freedom of information and data protection law. To that end we will continue to publish the outcome of every investigation, and highlight instances where learning from investigations could assist other campaigners in understanding and applying the law. We are accountable to the Courts

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# Underpinning this work continued

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for our decisions and the reasons for them, as well as being accountable to parliaments.

## **Basing our policy positions and recommendations on analysis of evidence**

Our recommendations must be evidence-based and underpinned by research if they are to be trusted, adopted and taken forward. We will continue to conduct research to understand how elections and referendums have been run and experienced. We will continue to develop our evidence base on all issues that impact the electoral system – from voters' perceptions of the legitimacy of elections, to challenges faced by electoral administrators. We will embed the horizon-scanning approach that underpins our policy development work, and will continue to identify challenges and recommend solutions.

## **Effectively communicating our work and views**

We want to ensure our work and our considered views have impact. We will therefore continue to ensure all information relevant to Wales is published in English and Welsh. We will use plain English and Cymraeg Clir, avoid jargon to aid understanding, and will communicate clearly to all audiences. We will continue to make our services and the information we provide accessible.

## **Providing responsive services to those we support**

We support our stakeholders – including voters, campaigners, and electoral administrators – with accessible information and guidance on all aspects of the electoral system. They come to us for advice and support, and expect a responsive service that meets their needs. We will continue to consult our stakeholders to understand their expectations of our services, and will make improvements based on their needs. We will maintain high standards of customer service.

## **Maintaining effective governance arrangements**

We outline our governance arrangements in Section 12 of this Corporate Plan.

## **2. We are a skilled organisation where diversity is valued**

We want our workforce to feel valued and be supported to achieve their potential. In the next five years we will:

- implement refreshed working practices to reflect wider changes in our work environment and culture
- attract, retain and develop the people we need
- maintain and improve high standards of leadership and management, with a focus on developing our people
- further embed equality, diversity and inclusion in all aspects of our work
- ensure the Welsh language is treated no less favourably than the English language

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## Underpinning this work continued

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### **Implement refreshed working practices to reflect wider changes in our work environment and culture**

The coronavirus pandemic has impacted our working practices and resulted in new behaviours and approaches. We will learn from this to ensure that we retain the benefits, embedding more flexible working in ways that benefit our people, the Commission as a whole and our stakeholders. We will ensure our culture and behaviours reflect these values. We will also strengthen our approach to internal communications, working hard to keep our people connected, informed and motivated. We provide more information about how we will utilise technology to support new working practices below.

### **Attract, retain and develop the people we need**

Our people are the core of our organisation. We will enable them to be skilled, with the diverse expertise needed to deliver our work. We will ensure they are capable, with a focus on being effective in everything they do, and committed, with a passion for democracy and our role in supporting it. We don't take these qualities for granted, and we will continue to implement our People Strategy to ensure we continue to attract, retain and develop the best team possible.

### **Maintain and improve high standards of leadership and management, with a focus on developing our people**

Learning is a key part of our people's day to day work, and we are committed to supporting their development. We will continue to achieve high standards of leadership, management and people development, consulting our people to ensure we support their specific needs.

### **Further embed equality, diversity and inclusion in all aspects of our work**

We value diversity, and aim to be an open and inclusive organisation. We celebrate the breadth of thinking, skills and experience that our people bring to our organisation. And, we are committed to being an inclusive regulator, with strategies and processes that reflect the diversity of those we serve. We will deliver a renewed equality, diversity and inclusion strategy. We will implement the Business in the Community Race at Work Charter. And, we will work to increase and support diversity at senior levels, including representation on our Commission Board.

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## Underpinning this work continued

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### **Ensure the Welsh language is treated no less favourably than the English language**

We are committed to treating the Welsh and English languages equally in all our work. We will continue to ensure that people in Wales can access our services and all information we publish which relates to Wales in both Welsh and English. We will continue to fulfil our statutory responsibility by meeting the Welsh Language Standards, set by the Welsh Language Commissioner through the Compliance Notice.

We plan to strengthen our commitment to these standards, and the Welsh language more generally, by implementing a new Welsh Language Compliance Plan. This will include appointing a senior owner of the Welsh Language Standards within the Electoral Commission. The Electoral Commission in Wales will continue to lead and support other teams throughout the UK to uphold the Welsh Language Standards.

### **3. We are a learning organisation where improvement is continuous and resources are used efficiently**

The world around us is changing rapidly. We need to adapt fast to be successful. In order to do this we aim to be rigorous in learning from experience and seek continuous improvement in all that we do. With pressures on public spending set to continue, it is crucial that we continue to manage our costs and make effective use of our technology, funding, time and resources. In the next five years we will:

- procure and implement value for money IT systems that improve service delivery
- maintain our financial strategy to keep the Commission within approved budgets
- continue to develop techniques to learn from experience, seek continuous improvement and become more efficient and effective
- develop a corporate environmental strategy that meets policy and legislative requirements for reduced environmental impact

We will do this through effective leadership and management within a five-year financial plan that is aimed at costs of no more after inflation in 2026/27 than it does in 2021/22.

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## Underpinning this work continued

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### **Procure and implement value for money IT systems that improve service delivery**

Technology and data are crucial to our work. Our website and Political Finance Online database allow us to publish vital information which is in the public interest, bringing transparency to our democracy. Our internal systems are key to ensuring the quality of our work, and enable us to effectively manage risk. We will continue our programme to procure and implement new IT systems. We will ensure our infrastructure is up to date and fit for purpose. We will launch our new Political Finance Online database to make it easier and faster for parties and campaigners to submit financial data. We will also implement a new customer relationship management tool.

### **Maintain our financial strategy to keep the Commission within approved budgets**

We detail our financial strategy in Section 8. With pressures on public spending and a need to ensure value for money, our spend on core services will be no higher in real terms at the end of the Corporate Plan period than it is at the beginning. We will work to increase the value we deliver for parliaments.

### **Continue to develop techniques to learn from experience, seek continuous improvement and become more efficient and effective**

Technology enables us to run an efficient workplace, but our processes are also key to ensuring the quality of our work. We will embed quality management processes across all our services and functions. We want to improve the way we make decisions, and will also make better use of our knowledge. We will develop and implement a new knowledge management framework. We want to meet the needs of voters, parties and campaigners, electoral administrators and parliaments, and will undertake research to understand their expectations of our services.

### **Develop a corporate environmental strategy that meets policy and legislative requirements**

We outline our plans to reduce the environmental impact of the electoral system in sections 2 and 5 of this Corporate Plan. We are also committed to reducing the environmental impact of our organisation. We will enhance our expertise, ensuring we have the environmental skills we need. We will carry out an environmental audit. We will develop and implement an action plan to achieve our environmental targets in line with legislation. This will include reducing waste and increasing recycling where possible.

# 9. Managing our costs

“ Spending on core budgets includes our work supporting voters, electoral administrators, parties and campaigners outside of the cycle of elections, as well as our corporate overheads.

Our budget varies from year to year depending on the cycle of elections. Our event budget reflects the costs associated with each year's elections. This varies significantly year-to-year owing to the cycle of elections, and will change if unscheduled polls are added which need to be delivered effectively. This is presented as a separate budget line to allow for more effective control and scrutiny of our core budget.

Spending on core budgets includes our work supporting voters, electoral administrators, parties and campaigners outside of the cycle of elections, as well as our corporate overheads. Our core budget will be no larger at the end of the period, after inflation, than it was at the beginning (using HM Treasury's preferred measure for public spending and inflation assumptions where available). While we would always seek to manage our costs within these budgets, increases to the rate of inflation or changes to our work programme to reflect changes outside our control represent the main risks to our spending plans.

## Budgets 2022/23 – 2026/27

£ millions	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
Core expenditure	13.35	13.37	13.78	14.21	14.38
Event	6.05	4.10	5.28	6.25	4.56
The Elections Bill	2.06	2.84	2.55	2.35	2.41
<b>Operational spending</b>	<b>21.46</b>	<b>20.31</b>	<b>21.61</b>	<b>22.81</b>	<b>21.35</b>
Policy Development Grants	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00
Depreciation	1.50	1.49	1.57	1.56	1.57
Provisions	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.20	0.20
<b>Total Spending plans</b>	<b>25.11</b>	<b>23.95</b>	<b>25.33</b>	<b>26.57</b>	<b>25.12</b>
<b>Capital budget</b>	<b>0.63</b>	<b>0.47</b>	<b>1.55</b>	<b>0.50</b>	<b>1.09</b>

# Managing our costs continued

Our capital budgets reflect planned and forecast needs to invest in capitalised IT hardware and software. The levels of capital spending in 2024/25 and 2026/27 represent new or renewed leases for offices in Cardiff and Edinburgh. We remain committed to having continued presence in all parts of the UK, and as we take advantage of increasingly flexible ways of working we will keep our office needs under continuous review.

## Funding

We are jointly funded by the Senedd, the UK Parliament, and the Scottish Parliament. The box below explains more about how that works.

### Draft devolved funding shares 2022/23 – 2026/27

	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
<b>Budget on funding basis (£m)</b>	22.96	21.80	23.18	24.37	22.93
<b>Senedd</b>					
£m	1.42	1.25	1.25	1.65	1.79
%	6.18%	5.74%	5.39%	6.75%	7.80%
<b>UK Parliament</b>					
£m	19.70	19.03	20.35	20.25	18.33
%	85.81%	87.27%	87.78%	83.12%	79.96%
<b>Scottish Parliament</b>					
£m	1.84	1.52	1.58	2.47	2.81
%	8.01%	6.98%	6.83%	10.13%	12.24%



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# Managing our costs continued

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## Focus on accountability and funding

As part of the devolution of powers relating to elections, the Wales Act 2017 made provision for the Commission to become accountable to the Senedd. The Scotland Act 2016 also makes the Commission accountable to the Scottish Parliament, and we remain accountable to the UK Parliament.

The direct costs of delivering our functions for each parliament are funded by that parliament, with overheads (including depreciation but not capital budgets or provisions) shared according to population. Cost shares can vary due to changes in work programme or electoral cycle.

In Wales, as a result of the Senedd and Elections (Wales) Act 2020, the Llywydd's Committee oversees our funding and corporate accountability. In Scotland, this role is undertaken by the Scottish Parliament Corporate Body, and in the UK Parliament by the Speaker's Committee on the Electoral Commission. Scrutiny and accountability on specific aspects of our work is generally undertaken by specific policy committees, such as the Senedd's Local Government and Housing Committee.

Each year in the autumn we submit an estimate of income and expenditure to the committees, accompanied by our plans for the coming year (or five years when we submit a Corporate Plan). The committees then consider these according to the timetables in each parliament.

The plans, budgets and other information that we submit to the committees are as required by each committee. We will continue to work with the committees, the parliamentary officials and other relevant partners to ensure effective accountability.

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# 10. Measuring our performance

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Throughout our plan we identify improvements we will deliver. These aim to benefit the public, parties and campaigners, electoral administrators and parliaments. We will measure how well we realise these improvements over the course of our Corporate Plan using a range of indicators for Wales and across the UK. We will use a mix of quantitative and qualitative measures, using them to drive continuous improvements in our procedures and skills. This will include annual and five-year targets against key measures.

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## Measuring our performance

Strategic objectives	Improvements	Performance indicators
<b>1. Accessible registration and voting</b>	Increased ease of registering and voting	Public satisfaction with the system of registering to vote Public satisfaction with the process of voting Accuracy of the electoral register Completeness of the electoral register Votes rejected and not included in the count for elections Public perception that the process of voting is easy Additions to electoral registers during our public awareness campaigns

## Measuring our performance (continued)

Strategic objectives	Improvements	Performance indicators
<b>2. Transparent political campaigning and compliant political finance</b>	Maintained availability of information	Publish donation and loan reports within deadlines Publish statements of accounts within deadlines
	Increased confidence in decision making	Applicants are notified of the outcome of their registration application within the working day targets Decisions on final notices issued for representations within deadlines Progression and conclusion of investigations within targets for complexity
	Increased compliance with electoral law	Responses to requests for regulatory advice on financial reporting within targets Public perception that appropriate action will be taken by the authorities if a political party or a campaigner is caught breaking the rules on campaign funding
<b>3. Resilient local electoral services</b>	Maintained quality of electoral services	Formal Electoral Registration Officers and Returning Officers performance assessment when standards are not met Guidance products for electoral administrators published on time with no substantive errors Confidence that elections are well run Election reports published within deadlines
	Maintained confidence in the electoral process	Public confidence in knowing how to register to vote Public confidence in how to cast their vote
<b>4. Fair and effective electoral law</b>	Increased parliamentary accountability	Election, referendum and other reports responded to by the relevant government within deadlines Responses to policy proposals and legislative consultations by the deadlines Responses to members of the Senedd's correspondence responded to within deadlines
<b>5. A modern and sustainable electoral system</b>	Improved security of the electoral system	Public perception that voting in general is safe from fraud and abuse
	Increased environmental sustainability	Meeting requirements if existing and emerging or new environmental legislation

## The strategic objectives are underpinned by three key factors

Key factors	Improvements	Performance indicators
<b>1. We demonstrate independence and integrity</b>	Improved reputation as an independent regulator	<p>Responses to oral and written Senedd questions within timeframes</p> <p>Responses to requests for advice from Electoral Registration Officers and Returning Officers within deadlines</p> <p>Responses to requests for elections guidance from candidates and agents within deadlines</p> <p>Responses to requests and enquiries from the public within deadlines</p>
<b>2. We are a skilled organisation where diversity is valued</b>	Maintained staff well-being	Staff engagement score from the annual employee survey
<b>3. We are a learning organisation where improvement is continuous and resources are used efficiently</b>	Increased value for money	Agreed auditors' recommendations that are implemented by the target date

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# 11. Managing risks and opportunities

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We have designed our risk management processes to:

- maintain a clear framework across the organisation within which risks are identified, assessed, managed and regularly reviewed
- assign specific responsibility for managing risks in their areas of responsibility to individual Executive Team members (including managing risks to significant projects)
- ensure that the likelihood and impact of risks are assessed on a consistent basis
- ensure that existing risks are regularly reviewed and that new risks are identified and managed
- provide the Chief Executive, the Audit and Risk Committee and the Board with assurance that the risks are being managed appropriately

We identify and evaluate risks by:

- taking key decisions following consideration of opportunities, risks and associated mitigations, which are separately identified in papers for the Board and those taking delegated decisions
- considering whether new risks should be added to the organisational risk register, and whether the existing risks' profiles need to be changed, both as changes are identified and as part of our quarterly review of risk
- completing a review of risk at the start of each year, to ensure that the organisational risk register captures risk to the delivery of objectives in our Corporate Plan
- presenting a risk report to each meeting of the Audit and Risk Committee and also annually to the Board
- identifying risk through our planning process, audit, review of operations and training activities
- assigning owners to risks who formally review the likelihood, potential impact and the mitigations in place for all risks each quarter subject to review by the Audit and Risk Committee

We are committed to continuously improving our risk management processes and are currently reviewing our procedures to ensure they remain in line with good practice and match our ambitions for this Corporate Plan period.

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# 12. Our governance arrangements

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We are led by a Board of Commissioners, who set the strategic direction and are responsible for our work.

The Board is made up of ten Commissioners, one of whom is the Chair. Three of the Commissioners are appointed to represent Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland respectively. These Commissioners provide advice and support in relation to these nations of the UK. They also advise on the impact of our work and are consulted by the Commission Board on matters in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Four of the Commissioners are nominated by the leaders of political parties: one by the party with the largest number of MPs in the UK Parliament, two more by the second and third largest parties respectively, and one by the other political parties with two or more MPs elected to and having taken their seats in the UK Parliament. The remaining two Commissioners have no specific brief, which enables them to bring their expertise and experience to work areas for the Commission as the need arises. All Commissioners are appointed by Her Majesty the Queen, on a motion of the UK Parliament.

As part of the Corporate Framework the Board has two sub-committees: the Audit and Risk Committee and the Remuneration and Human Resources Committee. Both are chaired by Commissioners.

Alongside the Board of Commissioners, we also consult regularly with the Parliamentary Parties' Panel for Wales, and equivalent Panels for the UK, Scotland and Northern Ireland. These were set up to allow political parties to give us feedback about matters affecting them. We also consult with other advisory groups.

The Chief Executive is the Accounting Officer.

We are accountable to the Senedd, the UK Parliament and the Scottish Parliament.

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# The Electoral Commission

The Electoral Commission is the independent body which oversees elections and regulates political finance in the UK. We work to promote public confidence in the electoral system and ensure its integrity.

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