

The
Electoral
Commission



Corporate plan 2010–11 to 2014–15

Integrity and public confidence



HC 465

Corporate plan 2010–11 to 2014–15

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Foreword

This plan sets out the Electoral Commission's priorities for the next five years and what we plan to do to achieve our aim of integrity and public confidence in the UK's democratic process.

People's ability to choose between the competing views of political parties through safe elections that are straightforward, accessible and secure, underpins our democracy. Voters need to have confidence in the way our electoral system works, and we put voters' interests at the heart of what we do.

The Electoral Commission is a UK-wide body serving voters across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. We support elections to Parliaments, Assemblies and local authorities across the UK as well as to the Westminster and European Parliaments. We ensure that we are accountable to elected representatives across the UK and maintain good communication with political parties.

The Electoral Commission marks its 10th anniversary during 2010–11. The past decade has seen important changes. We have seen a step change in transparency around political donations – by 31 December 2009 we had published details of over 25,000 separate donations to political parties, totalling more than £363 million. The number of political parties registered with us rose from 122 in February 2001 to 384 in December 2009 – 18 of these parties have elected representatives in the UK, Scottish and European Parliaments and the Wales and Northern Ireland Assemblies, with others represented in local authorities across the UK.

We have reported on 27 elections during the past 10 years, including the 2001 and 2005 UK general elections, two elections to each of the Scottish Parliament, the National Assembly for Wales and the Northern Ireland Assembly, three elections to the Greater London Authority and two elections to the European Parliament. We have produced hundreds of pieces of guidance for those who run

elections, ensuring that they have access to clear and consistent advice. We oversaw the 2004 referendum on a regional assembly for the North East of England. This decade of experience and knowledge of UK electoral events ensures we can confidently respond to any probable referendums in the next five years, and fulfil our obligations to act as Chief Counting Officer for any referendums run in accordance with the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000.

The Electoral Administration Act 2006 brought many aspects of how elections are run into line with voters' expectations in the twenty-first century. It also expanded our role to allow us to set performance standards for the Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) and Returning Officers (ROs) who are responsible for running elections across England, Scotland and Wales. We expect to see Northern Ireland come into that performance standards framework shortly. Also in the past year, the Political Parties and Elections Act 2009 (PPE Act) finally began the process of moving England, Scotland and Wales away from the system of electoral registration by household – instead, each elector will be responsible for their own entry on the electoral register under a system of individual electoral registration. This is a very significant change and we are fully committed to its success.

The PPE Act responded to our calls for an overhaul of our regulatory powers and sanctions. It paved the way for a framework which would place us alongside other modern regulators. We look forward to Parliament's early agreement to the secondary legislation that will put the new framework into effect.

The PPE Act also changed our own governance arrangements. Four new Electoral Commissioners, nominated by political parties, will be joining the current Commission Board in due course. We expect these new Commissioners to bring recent party political experience to the Board.

The Boundary Committee for England became a statutory committee of the Electoral Commission in April 2002 – it had previously been the Local Government Commission for England. There have been many developments since then affecting local government in England, and the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 re-establishes the Boundary Committee as a separate, independent body – the Local Government Boundary Commission for England – from April 2010.

Looking ahead, our focus continues to be on effective regulation of party and election finance, and a well-run electoral system. Our plans take into account what others have told us about what we do well and where we need to do better. In the current economic climate, we have also looked hard at our costs, reducing our core costs over the next five years.

We will follow the principles of better regulation in dealing with party and election finance. We want to help those we regulate to get it right. When people do not follow the rules, we will use our enforcement powers effectively and proportionately.

In support of a well-run electoral system, we have completed a full assessment across England, Scotland and Wales of how EROs and ROs measure up against our performance standards.

We were pleased that all EROs and ROs completed their assessments against our performance standards following the autumn 2008 and autumn 2009 annual canvasses (EROs) and the June 2009 elections (ROs).

The performance of EROs improved between 2008 and 2009 across all four subject areas covered by our standards. In 2009, 96% of EROs met or exceeded the standards relating to completeness and accuracy of electoral registers, compared with 85% who did so in 2008.

Performance was weakest in relation to promoting participation. In 2009, 41% of EROs did not meet the standard relating to public awareness. Of those, 90% failed the standard in both years and nearly a third of those in England and Wales¹ were also below the equivalent standard for ROs.

A lack of formal planning remains an area of concern. There has been an improvement in performance for the five standards requiring a documented plan, but there remains room for further improvement. The absence of formal plans makes scrutiny difficult and accountability is reduced. In small teams, documented plans and strategies mitigate the impact of staff absences or departures. We do not regard the reasons that are commonly given for the absence of documented plans as removing the need for them.

Nine out of 10 Local Returning Officers (LROs) for the June 2009 European Parliamentary elections in Great Britain met all three of the performance standards set by the Commission relating to the planning and organisation of the elections. However we were again disappointed to see weaknesses in relation to the promotion of public

¹ In Scotland, the offices of ERO and RO are entirely separate functions.



awareness and participation, where a quarter of LROs met only one or two of the standards. We also identified that one in five LROs, 73 in total, did not meet the performance standard relating to identifying and managing the risk of electoral malpractice, principally because formally documented plans were not in place.

We will be working hard to ensure that all EROs and ROs meet the standards, across England, Scotland and Wales, and shortly, we expect, in Northern Ireland as well.

No one – least of all the Electoral Commission – underestimates the scale of the change involved in moving from the current system of electoral registration by household to a more accurate and secure system of individual electoral registration. We have called for this change since 2003 and will have a key role to play in assessing its success.

We will advise the UK Government, local EROs and others committed to the importance of our electoral process on how best to help everyone who is eligible to ensure they are properly registered under the new system. Each year we will report on how well the change is being achieved. In July 2014 it will be our job to make a formal report to the UK Government on whether England, Scotland and Wales are ready to make the final move away from the household registration system.

The next five years will be challenging ones for all those involved in democracy in the UK. This plan highlights where we think there will be particular issues for party and election finance, and the electoral process, over this period. In each area we have set out how we will address these issues and the relationships we will foster to deliver our objectives.



Aim, values, objectives and priorities

Aim

Integrity and public confidence in the UK's democratic process

Values

Fair – we are fair in the way we treat each other and the people and organisations we deal with

Impartial – we are impartial in our decisions and actions

Transparent – we are transparent about how we work

Objectives



Objective 1

Transparency and integrity in party and election finance



Objective 2

Well-run elections, referendums and electoral registration



Objective 1

Transparency and integrity in party and election finance

Our priorities



We want to make sure that those we regulate understand the rules – including the changes introduced by the PPE Act, and the rules governing party and candidate spending and donation reporting at UK general elections – and to be confident that we will give them advice and guidance as needed.



We want to enable political involvement through an efficient party registration service, so that all those who want to register in order to take part in politics are able to do so without unnecessary burdens or delays.



We want voters to be confident that they have good-quality information about donations, campaign spending and party finances, particularly in relation to major elections across the UK.



We want to maintain a clear understanding of the potential gaps in the regulatory system and how to address them. This work includes identifying inefficient requirements that impose undue burdens on those we regulate, as well as areas where the current controls are inadequate.



We want those we regulate to submit all statutory returns on time, and for those returns to be accurate, so that voters have timely and reliable information.



We want voters to be confident that impermissible donations to parties and individuals are effectively identified and quickly removed from the system.



We want voters to be confident that those who fail to comply with the law are held to account, with fair, thorough and proportionate investigations that lead to appropriate outcomes. We want to carry out our enforcement activity thoroughly but without delays, so that all those involved do not wait longer than necessary for decisions.



Objective 2

Well-run elections, referendums and electoral registration

Our priorities



We want to see a system of individual electoral registration successfully implemented in England, Scotland and Wales to ensure people are served by an effective, secure and convenient registration process.



We want to ensure that there are no unnecessary barriers to people registering to vote, and to ensure that electoral registration policy and practice is supported by evidence about what works.



We want to make sure people know how to register to vote and encourage them to do so, and make sure people know how to cast their vote, so that anyone who is entitled to participate in elections is able to do so.



We want to make sure people are confident that elections and referendums across the UK are administered effectively and securely, by evaluating and reporting on the administration of elections and identifying areas where improvements to electoral law and practice are needed.



We want to make sure that those who run electoral registration and elections have access to clear, comprehensive and helpful guidance to ensure consistency and support improvements in practice and performance.



We want people across the UK to be confident that electoral registration and elections are well run, by providing objective information about performance, challenging poor performance and highlighting good practice to improve the management of elections.

Working across the UK

The Electoral Commission is a UK-wide body and has a well-established role in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. This ensures our key objectives are delivered across the different political and electoral systems in the UK. We have strong links with the UK and devolved governments and legislatures in Westminster, Edinburgh, Cardiff and Belfast. We maintain good working relationships with political parties through our political parties' panels and with electoral administrators through individual contact, training, and seminars.

During 2010–11, the priorities for our offices in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland will be to deliver our objectives on party and election finance and a well-run electoral process as set out in this plan. In particular:

Scotland

In Scotland, we will continue to work with the Electoral Management Board and hope to see this on a more permanent footing to support improved electoral administration in general, a UK general election, and in the following year, elections to the Scottish Parliament. We will also be working with political parties in Scotland to ensure that the new powers and sanctions we have under the PPE Act are well understood by those we regulate.





Wales

In Wales, we will continue to work with the Elections Planning Group and Returning Officers on plans for the elections to the National Assembly for Wales in May 2011. Our role will include formal scrutiny of updated legislation on the conduct of the elections. We will be working with political parties in Wales to ensure that the new powers and sanctions we have under the PPE Act are well understood by those we regulate. Following the report of the All Wales Convention, we are ready to support any future referendum on further law-making powers for the National Assembly for Wales.

Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland, we will work with the Chief Electoral Officer in planning for elections in 2011 to the Northern Ireland Assembly and to the restructured local authorities. We will also be working towards extending performance standards for electoral registration and the running of elections to Northern Ireland and assessing the Chief Electoral Officer's performance against these standards. We will support the Chief Electoral Officer as he takes on the conduct of public awareness campaigns in Northern Ireland in support of registration and elections. We will continue to work with political parties in Northern Ireland to ensure that the new powers and sanctions we have under the PPE Act are understood by those we regulate. Following consultation, we will administer any changes agreed by the UK Government to the Northern Ireland donations and loans scheme.





Objective 1

Transparency and integrity in party and election finance

We want people throughout the UK to be confident that:

- there is transparency about party and election finance so that people know where money comes from and how it is spent
- the rules on party and election finance are followed, and those who do not follow them are dealt with appropriately and effectively

Introduction

It is vital for the health of our democracy that political parties, candidates and campaigners are able to develop policy and get their messages across to voters. To do this, they need to attract volunteers as party officers and campaigners, and raise money to fund their activities.

As the regulator of party and election finance, we want people to have confidence in the transparency and integrity of the UK party and election finance system. This is an important part of maintaining confidence in the UK's democratic structures and processes. We ensure the transparency of political finance by publishing information so that people can see clearly how parties and individuals obtain their funding and how they spend it when fighting election campaigns and referendums. We maintain integrity by providing advice and guidance to those we regulate about what the law allows – who they can accept donations from, and what information they have to report to us – and by taking action where the rules are not followed.

We aim to carry out our regulatory functions in a way that supports the political process and helps political parties to thrive. Most of the organisations that we regulate do follow the rules and we want to help all those we regulate to understand their legal obligations. We recognise the critical role that volunteers play in parties and campaigning organisations, and we are committed to regulating in an effective but proportionate way, using advice and guidance rather than enforcement action as our preferred means of improving compliance. The Political Parties and Elections Act 2009 (PPE Act) has paved the way for new powers and civil sanctions that will help us to do this more effectively over the coming years.

Ensuring transparency

There is now more transparency about the funding of UK political parties than there has ever been. Although the parties were unable to agree to the systemic changes considered by the review chaired by Sir Hayden Phillips in 2007, *Strengthening Democracy: Fair and Sustainable Funding of Political Parties*, debate at Westminster and beyond about the need for further change has remained lively.

The PPE Act has introduced further refinements to the rules, although some of these are complex and we will need to explain them carefully to those we regulate. However, the Act also increased donation permissibility and reporting thresholds by significantly more than the rate of inflation; we will need to monitor the impact this has on transparency.

The controversy over MPs' expenses is for the most part not directly related to the party and election finance regime that we regulate, but it has shaken public confidence and highlighted the need for continued effort to rebuild trust in the way in which politics and politicians are funded.

Our priorities



We want to make sure that those we regulate understand the rules – including the changes introduced by the PPE Act, and the rules governing party and candidate spending and donation reporting at UK general elections – and to be confident that we will give them advice and guidance as needed.

Key activities planned to achieve this:

In 2010–11 we will:

- continue and expand our current advice and guidance work, especially in relation to the rules for UK general elections, and publish timely and high-quality guidance on new regulatory requirements
- provide training and briefings to those we regulate on new developments in all parts of the UK, working with the larger parties to integrate our services with their events and training
- start to publish revised guidance on high-priority regulatory issues, informed by the findings of a review of our guidance which we carried out during 2009–10

- prepare to give proactive advice to those we regulate who we identify as higher-risk through our new approach to risk assessment, and to those who we assess as requiring specific advice as the result of enforcement activity

Between 2011 and 2015 we expect to:

- complete the publication of revised guidance in all areas of party and election finance regulation, to ensure it is clear and meets users' needs as far as possible, in line with the findings of our guidance review
- continue to provide high quality training, briefings and advice to those we regulate, covering the ongoing requirements of the regulatory regime and specific events such as elections and referendums

Output and outcome measures

Measures	Target 2009–10	Target 2010–11
Percentage of responses to requests ²		
(a) for routine advice issued within 5 working days	(a) 95%	(a) 95%
(b) for formal advisory opinions and other advice on novel and complex matters issued within 30 working days	(b) 90%	(b) 90%

² 'Routine advice' relates to matters that are covered in the Commission's published guidance or where there is otherwise a readily available precedent; any request outside this is treated as a 'novel and complex' matter.



We want to enable political involvement through an efficient party registration service, so that all those who want to register in order to take part in politics are able to do so without unnecessary burdens or delays.

We will continue to use the party registration process as a way of explaining the legal implications and obligations of registration, and will also use information captured at registration to inform our risk assessment and how we target our regulatory resources.

Key activities planned to achieve this:

In 2010–11 we will:

- continue to provide an accurate and efficient service to those wishing to register a new political party, ensuring that applicants are given clear, helpful and realistic guidance on the benefits and obligations of registration
- assess the effectiveness of the current registration process in advising potential new parties about the obligations of registration and how to comply with them

- make full use of our new online service ('Party and Election Finance Online') to support the party registration process
- introduce a more streamlined application process for designated campaigning organisations in a referendum

Between 2011 and 2015 we expect to:

- review the fee schedule for party registration and recommend any changes

Output and outcome measures

Measures	Target 2009–10	Target 2010–11
Percentage of new political parties registered within 20 working days	95%	95%



We want voters to be confident that they have good-quality information about donations, campaign spending and party finances, particularly in relation to major elections across the UK.

We will achieve this through publishing information about political income and expenditure; appropriate use of our regulation-making powers; targeted auditing; and good-quality analysis, reporting and communications, supported by horizon scanning and campaign monitoring.

Key activities planned to achieve this:

In 2010–11 we will:

- continue to check and publish statutory returns promptly, including weekly donation reports during UK general elections
- ensure our new online service fully supports both political parties and ourselves to fulfil responsibilities in the statutory returns process, and helps voters to get information on party and election finance as simply as possible
- plan and carry out a horizon scanning and campaign monitoring strategy for UK general elections
- publish a report on party funding and campaign spending for UK general elections
- plan and carry out a programme of risk-based audits of parties' annual statements of accounts
- work with political parties to agree a standard approach to reporting income in their annual statements of accounts

- review and revise the process for paying and auditing the use of the Policy Development Grants, which we are required to make to qualifying political parties, with a view to reducing cost and administrative burdens for both ourselves and the parties

Between 2011 and 2015 we expect to:

- monitor and report on the financial aspects of regulated elections, including the 2011 elections to devolved legislatures and the 2014 European Parliamentary elections, as well as any referendums where we are the regulator of campaign finances³
- deliver a standard approach to parties' annual statements of accounts that is effective in providing greater transparency of party finances, efficient in minimising the burden of completing and analysing the information, and that reduces the overall cost of compliance

³ See page 42 for an overview of elections and referendums in the period covered by this plan.



(Continued)

Output and outcome measures		
Measures	Target 2009–10	Target 2010–11
Percentage of returns submitted on time which we publish within 20 working days	100%	98% ⁴
Number of parties submitting one or more statutory returns electronically	New	20
Publish reports on financial aspects of regulated elections within 14 weeks of the last filing deadline for campaign expenditure returns	New	100%

⁴The number of returns to be processed will be considerably higher in a general election year, hence the slightly lower target in 2010–11.





We want to maintain a clear understanding of the potential gaps in the regulatory system and how to address them. This work includes identifying inefficient requirements that impose undue burdens on those we regulate, as well as areas where the current controls are inadequate.

We will take into account key events such as the run-up to, and lessons learned from, major elections across the UK. We will also draw on the full range of our ongoing regulatory work, including horizon scanning and analysis of new issues raised by our advisory and enforcement casework. We will assess the impact of changes, identify emerging issues and develop solutions, either by amending our existing powers or through recommendations for further changes to the law.

Key activities planned to achieve this:

In 2010–11 we will:

- finalise and publish our new enforcement policy, setting out how we will use the new powers and sanctions provided by the PPE Act
- work with the UK Government and those we regulate to support the implementation of any new regulatory requirements arising from the PPE Act that have not been commenced
- update our plans to ensure that where we are the regulator of campaign finances at a referendum, our regulation is effective
- complete reviews (which began in 2009–10) of regulation-making powers and administrative burdens
- continue to liaise with the Northern Ireland Office and others to ensure the effective operation of the Northern Ireland donations and loan scheme

- work with other regulators and enforcement bodies to finalise and maintain protocols on regulatory cooperation
- continue to keep the regulatory system under review

Between 2011 and 2015 we expect to:

- keep under review the potential impact of future legislative changes, and of any uncommenced provisions in existing legislation
- review the impact of changes made to the regulatory regime in 2009–10 (including increased donation thresholds and changes to reporting arrangements for MPs), and any issues arising from our ongoing enforcement casework



(Continued)

Output and outcome measures		
Measures	Target 2009–10	Target 2010–11
Agree and/or review protocols with other regulators and enforcement bodies once every two years	New	5 protocols agreed/ reviewed
For any referendum where we are the regulator of campaign finances, publish guidance on regulatory aspects at least one month before the regulated period begins	New	100% of such guidance published to this timetable

Ensuring integrity

There has been a good deal of focus on our role as the regulator of party and election finance in recent years, and we have made significant changes to become more effective. Enforcement action to date has improved compliance and raised awareness of compliance issues. The PPE Act has laid the foundations for the powers and sanctions that we need in order to regulate effectively.

As we start to make use of these new powers and sanctions, we will need to work hard to manage our relationships not just with those we regulate, but also with those who want to contribute to political parties and candidates as donors and supporters.





We want those we regulate to submit all statutory returns on time, and for those returns to be accurate, so that voters have timely and reliable information.

Key activities planned to achieve this:

In 2010–11 we will:

- identify those filing statutory returns who would benefit from advice and support to improve their ability to comply with the rules
- issue and pursue civil penalties as appropriate where there have been failures to comply with reporting requirements
- monitor and review statutory returns of donations and campaign expenditure associated with UK general elections
- prepare to meet our statutory obligations for any referendums where we are the regulator of campaign finances

Between 2011 and 2015 we expect to:

- monitor and review statutory returns of donations and campaign spending for major elections across the UK
- adapt our procedures in line with any changes in the reporting regime for Northern Ireland, and ensure that those we regulate understand the rules
- monitor and regularly review our use of sanctions, including their impact on compliance rates
- see more financial penalties paid on time, with a corresponding reduction in our need to pursue recovery

Output and outcome measures		
Measures	Target 2009–10	Target 2010–11
Percentage of statutory returns from those we regulate that are submitted on time	–	90%
Percentage of donations reported in the correct quarter		
(a) to parties' headquarters and	(a) –	(a) 100%
(b) to parties' accounting units	(b) –	(b) 95%
Percentage of compliance notices complied with and needing no further action ⁵	New	60%
Percentage of civil penalties paid within agreed deadline ⁵	New	50%

⁵ These indicators relate to functions that are new to the Commission. The activity levels in this area are uncertain, we have set our targets to reflect this.



We want voters to be confident that impermissible donations to parties and individuals are effectively identified and quickly removed from the system.

Key activities planned to achieve this:

In 2010–11 we will:

- continue to conduct effective checks to identify impermissible donations, and carry out timely and proportionate investigations where permissibility is in question
- continue to take timely action to remove impermissible funds from the political process through forfeiture or other available means

- ensure that advice is given when appropriate to enable compliance in the future

Between 2011 and 2015 we expect to:

- review our more risk-based approach to key compliance issues
- conduct a small number of random audits of low risk organisations

Output and outcome measures		
Measures	Target 2009–10	Target 2010–11
Percentage of reported impermissible donations received by those we regulate that are returned within statutory timescales	New	85%
Percentage of impermissible donations we identify as warranting forfeiture which are removed from the system	New	100%
Percentage of Electoral Commission impermissibility checks that are carried out within 28 days ⁶	New	95%

⁶The timescale (28 days) begins from the point that we receive all of the necessary information.





We want voters to be confident that those who fail to comply with the law are held to account, with fair, thorough and proportionate investigations that lead to appropriate outcomes. We want to carry out our enforcement activity thoroughly but without delays, so that all those involved do not wait longer than necessary for decisions.

Key activities planned to achieve this:

In 2010–11 we will:

- continue to assess all potential casework against agreed criteria within set timescales
- continue to conduct proportionate reviews and investigations that are within set timescales, which are proportionate and in accordance with our procedures and prevailing best practice
- conduct investigations to assess the reasons for non-compliance with the requirements
- apply sanctions where necessary, in line with agreed criteria to ensure that sanctions are consistent and that they both remove any benefit obtained by non-compliance and act as a general deterrent to those we regulate

- publish consistent and appropriate information about our enforcement activity and sanctioning
- benchmark our regulatory work against other regulators to ensure that we continue to achieve best practice

Between 2011 and 2015 we expect to:

- regularly review our procedures to identify efficiency opportunities and benchmark them against best practice
- ensure we understand the impact of our enforcement work on our stakeholders, including those we regulate
- identify areas where our enforcement experience suggests the current legal framework should be changed





(Continued)

Output and outcome measures		
Measures	Target 2009–10	Target 2010–11
Percentage of initial assessments ⁷ completed within 5 working days of identification	90%	95%
Percentage of cases under review ⁸ resolved within 90 days of identification	90%	95%
Percentage of investigations ⁹ resolved within 6 months of identification	90%	90%
Percentage of investigations ⁸ resolved within 12 months of identification	New	100%
Percentage of summaries of case reviews and investigations that are published within 5 working days of decision	New	95%
External review of quality management procedures in 2011–12	New	At least satisfactory assurance or higher

⁷ **Initial assessment** – at this stage, we assess matters raised with us or consider information we have become aware of ourselves, for example, through statutory returns or press reports. We establish if there is a potential breach of legislation and, if so, whether this warrants referral for a **case review** or **investigation**.

⁸ **Case under review** – where the initial assessment suggests there may be a breach of legislation, we seek to determine whether this is indeed the case. We do so by referring to information provided to us or which we become aware of as a result of enquiries. We will not at this stage use our formal powers of investigation and will not conduct interviews.

⁹ **Investigation** – we carry out impartial, fair and objective investigations. We will commence an investigation where we need to use our statutory powers to obtain information and/or where we need to interview individuals in order to obtain information necessary to determine where there has been a breach of legislation.

Progress indicators supporting Objective 1

The progress indicators below provide us with information about the wider perception of the level of transparency and integrity in party and election finance.

Progress indicators	Target 2009–10	Target 2010–11
Percentage of the UK public who are confident that the authorities would take appropriate action if someone was caught breaking party finance rules	–	45%
Percentage of the UK public who agree that 'There is more information available to the public now than in the recent past about how political parties are funded and spend their money'	–	70%





Objective 2

Well-run elections, referendums and electoral registration

We want people throughout the UK to be confident that:

- registering to vote and taking part in elections is straightforward, accessible and secure
- they will receive a consistently high quality service, wherever they live and whichever elections or referendums are being held

Introduction

We want electoral processes in the UK to meet people's needs, with levels of service that meet their expectations. Above all, we want people to be confident in the results of elections, and we want to make sure that confidence is not damaged by hard-to-follow procedures, administrative errors, alleged or actual fraud, or legal challenges.

There will be elections in different parts of the UK in every year of our five-year plan, and there is the potential for other significant events, such as referendums, at any time.¹⁰ Elections with different voting systems, different franchises and different management structures require a flexible approach from us and others to meet voters' needs and expectations.

We work with others to make this happen. Across the UK, Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) are responsible for compiling and maintaining electoral registers and Returning Officers (ROs) are responsible for the conduct of elections. The UK and Scottish Parliaments and the National Assembly for Wales are responsible for the legal and funding framework within which EROs and ROs carry out those responsibilities.

We therefore work with governments and legislators to improve the legal and funding framework where needed, and with EROs and ROs to improve the delivery of service to electors and candidates. In all this we aim to put voters at the heart of the electoral process.

Accessible and secure electoral registration and voting

In the 10 years since the Electoral Commission was established there have been significant and sustained changes to the way elections and electoral registration in the UK are run.

Postal voting on demand and rolling electoral registration have been introduced in England, Scotland and Wales, and continuous individual electoral registration has been introduced in Northern Ireland. There have been pilot schemes testing new ways of voting, and a regional referendum in the North East of England.

The next five years are unlikely to see the pace of change slowing down, with the introduction of individual electoral registration in England, Scotland and Wales, the possibility of a renewed focus on electoral modernisation, and renewed interest in referendums.

Electoral registration rates across the UK are still too low: our research showed that up to nine per cent of eligible citizens may have been missing from registers in England and Wales at the time of the last census in 2001, with groups such as young people and those from some minority ethnic groups much less likely to be registered. In Northern Ireland, the transition to individual electoral registration has increased confidence in the electoral process, although the challenge remains of making sure the register includes everyone who is entitled to vote.

¹⁰ See page 42 for an overview of elections and referendums in the period covered by this plan.

The number of people who are registered to vote has increased since 2001 – in December 2009 more than 46 million people were registered to vote across the UK – but we need to make sure that everyone who is eligible and wants to be registered is included.

The registration system in England, Scotland and Wales is still largely based on a single householder completing an application form for everyone else, an outdated concept left over from the way elections were managed in the nineteenth century. The PPE Act provided for the introduction of individual electoral registration across England, Scotland and Wales, and we welcome this significant change.

Developing and implementing a process that is secure and as easy as possible for everyone needs comprehensive planning, resources and support for EROs. Ensuring this is in place is a key priority for us throughout the period covered by this plan.

As long as they are on the register, voters in the UK are offered a choice of methods to cast their vote, with postal voting and voting via a proxy as alternatives to casting a vote in person at a local polling station. But while people may be happy with the range of voting methods available to them, they still have concerns about electoral fraud and other misconduct connected with elections.

While it is right to continue to explore options to make electoral registration and voting more accessible, any changes must include firm safeguards against vulnerabilities that could damage confidence in the integrity of the electoral process.



Our priorities



We want to see a system of individual electoral registration successfully implemented in England, Scotland and Wales to ensure people are served by an effective, secure and convenient registration process.¹¹

Key activities planned to achieve this:

In 2010–11 we will:

- work with the UK Government, EROs and others to ensure that a clear and robust plan is developed for implementing individual electoral registration, including research with electors and scrutiny of draft legislation to ensure that the process of collecting personal identifiers is as successful as possible
- provide guidance and support to help EROs collect personal identifiers in a way that is straightforward and accessible for electors

Between 2011 and 2015 we expect to:

- develop and coordinate a programme of public awareness activity to ensure electors understand what they need to do under the new registration system
- report annually on the implementation of individual electoral registration in England, Scotland and Wales
- make recommendations in 2014 about whether the provision of personal identifiers should be compulsory for everyone who wants to be included in the electoral register in England, Scotland and Wales

Output and outcome measures		
Measures	Target 2009–10	Target 2010–11
Publish details of our approach to monitoring the implementation of individual electoral registration including details of our research programme, taking into account views of stakeholders	New	Approach published by December 2010
Scrutinise and publish our views on draft regulations for implementing individual electoral registration, ensuring our views are available to Parliament and publicly to others at least 10 days before any consideration of draft regulations	New	100% of briefings published to this timescale ¹²
Publish guidance for EROs on new procedures for collecting personal identifiers, at least 5 months before the new procedures are commenced	New	100% of guidance to be published to this timescale ¹²

¹¹ Individual electoral registration was introduced in Northern Ireland in 2002.

¹² Subject to legislative timescales.



We want to ensure that there are no unnecessary barriers to people registering to vote, and to ensure that electoral registration policy and practice is supported by evidence about what works.

Key activities planned to achieve this:

In 2010–11 we will:

- continue our programme of research to develop understanding about local electoral registers and evaluate the effectiveness of current practices to improve electoral registration in England, Scotland and Wales
- continue to collect and analyse information on levels of funding for electoral registration services in England, Scotland and Wales, and develop a series of benchmarks and key performance indicators for local authorities to use to compare the costs of their electoral registration work and their performance with those of other local authorities

Between 2011 and 2015 we expect to:

- use 2011 census data to produce national estimates of registration levels and to identify those groups who may be least likely to be registered
- refine our programme of research to develop understanding about local electoral registers
- evaluate and report on the value of using other data sources to help improve the completeness and accuracy of electoral registers, as part of a programme of pilot schemes expected to be delivered by EROs in England, Scotland and Wales from 2011 – including work to test methodologies used to establish the level of under-registration and the causes of the inaccuracy and incompleteness of electoral registers

Output and outcome measures		
Measures	Target 2009–10	Target 2010–11
Percentage of local authorities returning our survey on funding levels of electoral registration services within the specified deadline	New	90%
Develop a series of benchmarks and performance indicators for local authorities to use to compare the cost and performance of their electoral registration services	New	Benchmarks and performance indicators in place by December 2010



We want to make sure people know how to register to vote and encourage them to do so, and make sure people know how to cast their vote, so that anyone who is entitled to participate in elections is able to do so.

Key activities planned to achieve this:

In 2010–11 we will:

- run a national voter registration campaign in advance of any UK general elections and the English local elections scheduled for May 2010
- run campaigns specially aimed at groups such as recent homemovers, students, overseas voters and people in the armed forces
- provide public information in advance of elections to enable people to cast their vote, including information about polling day, polling station opening hours and different methods and systems of voting

- plan and deliver public information campaigns for any referendum where we are responsible for promoting public awareness

Between 2011 and 2015 we expect to:

- continue to run campaigns designed to help people to register to vote and understand how to make sure their vote counts
- evaluate our strategy for reaching specific under-represented groups

Output and outcome measures		
Measures	Target 2009–10	Target 2010–11
Number of registration forms ordered as a result of information campaigns run by the Commission (including campaigns before elections)	–	226,550, including: General Election campaign – 150,000 Student campaign – 9,300 Homemover campaign ¹³ – 67,250 new or amended registrations

¹³ The homemovers campaign takes place towards the end of each financial year and the results are reported in the next financial year.



We want to make sure people are confident that elections and referendums across the UK are administered effectively and securely, by evaluating and reporting on the administration of elections and identifying areas where improvements to electoral law and practice are needed.

Key activities planned to achieve this:

In 2010–11 we will:

- evaluate and report, including any necessary recommendations, on UK general elections and elections to English local authorities
- build on the findings from our evaluation of the elections in 2010 to deliver evidence-based proposals for improving the legal and administrative framework for elections
- improve the design of ballot papers and other materials to help voters, using a new set of guidelines and recommendations that we published in 2009
- monitor proposals by the Government for modernisation of the electoral system, and ensure they are subject to public consultation and scrutiny, and that they take full account of voters' interests at every stage
- continue to collect and analyse information on levels of funding for electoral services in England, Scotland and Wales and make recommendations about any changes that are needed
- aim for progress towards bringing Scottish local elections under the broader legislative framework where we provide advice and guidance, and report on how the elections are run

Between 2011 and 2015 we expect to:

- evaluate and report on elections to the Scottish Parliament, National Assembly for Wales and Northern Ireland Assembly in 2011
- evaluate and report on European Parliamentary elections in 2014
- evaluate UK Parliamentary by-elections and local elections in England, Wales and Northern Ireland,¹⁴ reporting on any issues which arise
- ensure that, where we have this role, we evaluate the conduct of any referendums across the UK or parts of the UK, to identify improvements in the legal and management frameworks for any future referendums

¹⁴We may also be asked to report on the Scottish local government elections in 2012 as we did in 2003 and 2007.





(Continued)

Output and outcome measures		
Measures	Target 2009–10	Target 2010–11
Success in informing and influencing the policy debate and legislative framework for electoral registration and elections	New	We will report evidence of key successes in our annual report, including acknowledgement and support for our recommendations, and legislative change where required, and the impact on outcomes for voters.
Percentage of reports on the administration of elections published within 18 weeks of the polling day	100%	100%



Confidence in the way our electoral registration and elections are managed

In the last 10 years we have developed our role in providing support and advice to Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) and Returning Officers (ROs), and our guidance materials are now seen as essential tools for those who run elections. We have supported officers across England, Scotland and Wales as they have adapted to the changes to electoral processes since 2000, and we will continue to do so as new challenges – such as the introduction of individual electoral registration in England, Scotland and Wales – arise.

Since 2007 we have also built on our role to monitor performance, developing common standards and a reporting framework, which has been implemented across England, Scotland and Wales. We have reported on performance over two cycles of electoral registration. We have been pleased to see engagement in, and understanding of, the performance standards framework, and above all improvements in performance by EROs. Later in 2010 we will report for the second time on the performance of ROs, including their role in delivering the next UK general election.

The next phase of this work will be about supporting sustained performance improvement – building on and embedding high-quality working and management practices, to inspire confidence that electoral registration and elections are well-run and properly managed. This will mean difficult but honest discussions about performance where electors are not currently being provided with a high-quality service, but it will also involve help and support to make sure improvements can be made.

We have also highlighted the impact of change on the structures in place to manage the delivery of elections, and have made clear our concerns that current arrangements are close to breaking point in some areas. The challenge of ensuring that elections are appropriately resourced, managed and administered will require engagement and involvement by central and local governments and legislators, as well as professional support. Real progress has been made, particularly in Scotland with the establishment of an Electoral Management Board, to develop effective support and coordination networks among EROs and ROs, and we want to make sure there are appropriate arrangements to deliver progress in England and Wales.

We have worked with a wide range of partners to make significant progress in understanding and tackling electoral fraud and other misconduct connected with elections. With the professional police associations, we have been able to establish a network of contacts in police forces and with prosecutors across England, Scotland and Wales, which means that information about allegations is recorded and reported consistently and that police officers know what action to take in response. But we need to build on this network and move to year-round reporting of allegations, to make sure that any activity that may damage confidence in the electoral process is captured and included in our analysis.



Our priorities



We want to make sure that those who run electoral registration and elections have access to clear, comprehensive and helpful guidance to ensure consistency and support improvements in practice and performance.

Key activities planned to achieve this:

In 2010–11 we will:

- analyse data about the performance of EROs and ROs to develop more targeted guidance and support
- review our electoral integrity work, and develop and implement a strategy and action plan for future work
- continue to work with EROs, ROs, political parties, the police and prosecuting authorities in devising strategies and tools to promote integrity in the electoral registration process
- support EROs in England, Scotland and Wales in their duty to promote participation in the electoral registration process locally, by providing public awareness guidance and materials and ensuring that all EROs have a public awareness strategy

- set measurable performance targets for guidance and support for EROs and ROs
- work with EROs to tackle the problems where registration is lowest

Between 2011 and 2015 we expect to:

- maintain a constant state of readiness to support elections across the UK, including UK general elections, and provide guidance for those running these elections
- where we have this role, being ready to oversee the conduct of any referendums
- give guidance to EROs on the changes to the registration system in England, Scotland and Wales



Output and outcome measures		
Measures	Target 2009–10	Target 2010–11
Percentage of queries from EROs (by telephone/email) acknowledged on the first working day after they are received and responded to fully within 3 working days	100%	100%
Percentage of queries from ROs (by telephone/email) acknowledged on the first working day after they are received and responded to fully within 3 working days	100%	100%
<p>Finalise and make available, in consultation with ERO and RO representatives and the political parties panels, revisions and amendments to existing manuals by a set date each year:¹⁵</p> <p>(a) RO manual and candidates and agents guidance by the end of December</p> <p>(b) Registration guidance by the end of May</p>	New	100% of manuals revised and available by set dates

¹⁵ Subject to the timing of any relevant legislative changes.





We want people across the UK to be confident that electoral registration and elections are well run, by providing objective information about performance, challenging poor performance and highlighting good practice to improve the management of elections.

Key activities planned to achieve this:

In 2010–11 we will:

- analyse and publish information about the performance of EROs and ROs in England, Scotland and Wales against common performance standards
- analyse financial data provided by EROs and ROs in England, Scotland and Wales to identify any relationships between funding and performance
- work with the Chief Electoral Officer for Northern Ireland to develop and put in place appropriate performance standards for electoral registration and elections
- implement programmes of service improvement in those areas where performance standards are not being met, drawing on evidence of good practice from EROs and ROs who are performing well

Between 2011 and 2015 we expect to:

- update and revise our performance standards framework to ensure it remains appropriately challenging and reflect new requirements on EROs linked to the introduction of individual electoral registration
- implement systems that enable us to identify areas where there is a risk of poor performance
- support the development and implementation of improved electoral management structures in England, Scotland and Wales; including the Electoral Management Board in Scotland



Output and outcome measures		
Measures	Target 2009–10	Target 2010–11
Percentage of electors in Great Britain whose EROs meet or exceed performance standards relating to:	–	
(a) completeness and accuracy of the electoral register		(a) 90%
(b) integrity		(b) 90%
(c) participation		(c) 90%
(d) planning		(d) 90%
Percentage of electors in Great Britain whose ROs meet or exceed the performance standards relating to:	New	
(a) effective planning		(a) 90%
(b) integrity		(b) 90%
(c) participation activities in relation to a well-run election process		(c) 90%



Progress indicators supporting Objective 2

The progress indicators below help us to understand how well our elections, referendums and electoral registration process are run.

Progress indicators	Target 2009–10	Target 2010–11
Number of electors on the: (a) UK local government and (b) UK Parliamentary electoral registers ¹⁶	–	Trend: upwards compared with 2009–10
Percentage of UK public who say they are confident they know how to register to vote	–	90%
Percentage of the UK public who say they are satisfied with the process of registering to vote	–	85%
Estimated percentage of people eligible to register who are not registered to vote ¹⁷	–	New figures (to be collected following the 2011 census) to be a lower estimate than for 2000–1
Percentage of UK public who say they are confident they know how to vote	–	95%
Percentage of the UK public who say they are satisfied with the process of voting in the UK	–	80%
Percentage of UK voters who believe that elections are well run	–	95%
Percentage of the UK public who say electoral fraud is not a problem in the UK	–	70%

¹⁶ In 2009–10 the number of electors on the UK local government register was 46,455,890 and on the UK Parliamentary electoral register was 45,420,808.

¹⁷ The 2000–1 estimate for the percentage of people eligible to register to vote who are not registered to vote was between 8 and 9%. This figure is reported in 'Understanding Electoral Registration' 2005 and is based on a check of 2001 census records against the canvass of 15 October 2000. A repeat of this study will be conducted following the 2011 census. The current findings cover England and Wales only.



How we work

Governance

The Electoral Commission Board currently comprises six Commissioners, one of whom is the Chair. The Commission Board will increase in due course from six members to 10 with the advent of additional Commissioners brought in by the Political Parties and Elections Act 2009 (PPE Act). All Commissioners are appointed by Her Majesty The Queen. We are accountable to the UK Parliament, and specifically to a Committee chaired by the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Independence is critical to public confidence in our effectiveness, particularly in relation to undertaking our executive functions. We aim for a model of excellent corporate governance, practising core values of fairness, impartiality and transparency.¹⁸

The Speaker's Committee examines our five-year plan, and annual financial and forward resource estimates. One of its members also leads on responding to questions in the House of Commons on matters relating to our work. The Speaker's Committee is responsible for the recruitment of Commissioners. Members of the Speaker's Committee are: Rt Hon John Bercow MP (Speaker and Chairman of the Speaker's Committee), Rt Hon Sir Alan Beith MP (Chairman, House of Commons Justice Committee), Lady Sylvia Hermon MP, Rt Hon Sir Gerald Kaufman MP, Humfrey Malins CBE MP, Rt Hon Jack Straw MP (Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice), Gary Streeter MP, Sir Peter Viggers MP and Rt Hon Rosie Winterton MP (Minister for Local Government).¹⁹

The Electoral Commissioners are: Jenny Watson (Chair), Max Caller CBE, Henrietta Campbell CB, Ian Kelsall OBE DL, John McCormick and Tony Hobman. They are responsible for the Commission, and set our strategic direction.

The Executive Team support Commissioners by providing day-to-day leadership to successfully implement our corporate plan. The Commission's Executive Team members are: Peter Wardle (Chief Executive), Clare Ettinghausen (Deputy Chief Executive), Carolyn Hughes (Director of Finance and Corporate Services), Lisa Klein (Director of Party and Election Finance), Stephen Rooney (Director of Communication) and Andrew Scallan (Director of Electoral Administration).²⁰

We have offices in London, Edinburgh, Cardiff and Belfast, and offices based in Exeter, London, Coventry and York that cover the regions of England.

We publish full details of our performance each year through our annual report (which can be found on our website).

¹⁸ Our corporate governance framework is available at www.electoralcommission.org.uk/about-us/corporate-structure-and-management/governance.

¹⁹ Current membership can be found at www.parliament.uk/mpslordsandoffices/mps_and_lords/selcom.cfm#129.

²⁰ Clare Ettinghausen will be on maternity leave for part of 2010. For that period the role of Deputy Chief Executive will be undertaken by Carolyn Hughes.

Financial management

The Speaker's Committee has designated the Chief Executive as the Accounting Officer of the Commission and he is responsible for the propriety and regularity of finances and ensuring that proper records are kept and that assets are safeguarded.

He is supported in these responsibilities by the Director of Finance and Corporate Services and through a system of devolved and delegated budget control to Directors and senior managers.

Internal financial control procedures include regular internal financial reporting, scrutiny of all capital investment proposals and approval at Executive Team level, quarterly reviews with directors and their senior managers, regular resource forum meetings with senior managers and the appointment of business managers in each operational directorate.

The work of the Audit Committee, supported by internal and external auditors, is vital to financial integrity and probity and forms a key part of financial control.

The key priorities include continuously improving financial control processes and supporting managers with financial information and guidance in the context of devolved and delegated budgetary control.

Cost of delivering this plan

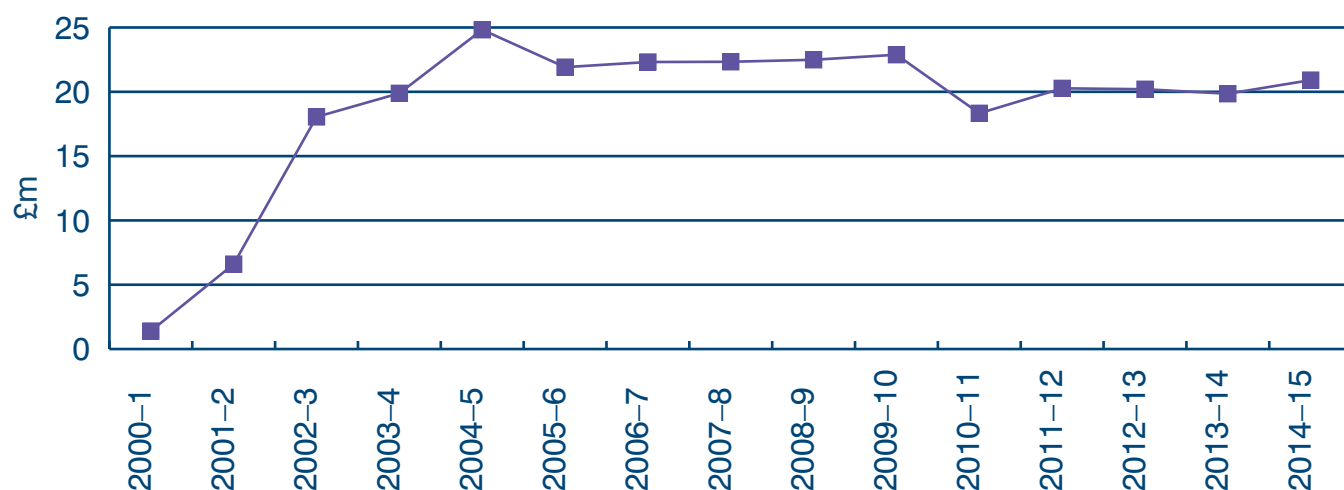
This section sets out the expected costs of delivering this five-year plan.

In delivering our objectives we seek to maintain our spending plans at the lowest level consistent with high-quality service delivery and so we are constantly reviewing and updating our spending plans and opportunities to make productivity and cash efficiency savings. By these methods we have maintained a fairly constant level of expenditure over the last five years from 2005–6 while delivering our objectives and refocusing its activities to align with the changing environment. Resource use since the Commission was established in 2000 is illustrated in Chart 1, including the forecast resource use for 2009–10 and planned use over the period covered by this corporate plan to 2014–15.

Notes for Chart 1:

- (i) 2004–5 included expenditure in relation to the regional referendum held in the North East of England.
- (ii) From April 2002 to March 2010 the resource expenditure includes that relating to the Boundary Committee for England. Boundary review activity will be carried out by a new independent organisation, the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, from April 2010.
- (iii) The expected costs for 2011–12 to 2014–15 do not include costs arising from UK general elections, or costs arising from referendums.

Chart 1: Resource expenditure per year: 2000–1 to 2008–9 audited accounts; 2009–10 forecast estimate; 2010–11 to 2014–15 planned



Since April 2007, we have agreed with the Speaker's Committee that we will not seek any increases in our annual budget to cover inflation – in other words, we will absorb increased costs of our core work by making efficiency savings. We are planning to continue this approach during the period covered by this plan, while also absorbing additional costs arising from new responsibilities, including our role in setting performance standards for those who run elections and electoral registration, and dealing with the new framework for party and election finance regulation introduced by the PPE Act.

The financial year 2010–11 is the final year of a four-year 'cash-flat' settlement agreed by the Speaker's Committee in April 2007. As the resource funding agreed was for the same amount in each year of this four-year period but our costs vary from year to year depending on when elections are scheduled, we have used end year flexibly (EYF) to match resource requirements between years. In the five years covered by this

plan we have made separate estimates of its core costs, which will remain flat in cash terms, and costs that will vary from year to year – these include the costs of supporting the various elections planned each year,²¹ and the costs of supporting the planned move to a system of individual electoral registration in England, Scotland and Wales. There are, however, two categories of event that we cannot predict the timing of with any certainty – UK general elections, and referendums. The costs to the Commission of supporting these events will be significant, but will vary considerably depending on their precise timing. These costs are discussed further below. It is planned to continue to use EYF to efficiently manage and match resource and capital requirements between years.

The expected costs of delivering this plan are shown in Chart 2 below. They do **not** include the costs of supporting a UK general election, or the costs of supporting and/or administering any referendum called during the period of the plan.

Chart 2: Planned resource and capital profile 2010–11 to 2014–15 excluding costs of UK general elections and referendum costs

	2010–11 £m	2011–12 £m	2012–13 £m	2013–14 £m	2014–15 £m
Resource					
Core Electoral Commission resource	14.800	15.000	15.000	15.000	15.000
Public awareness costs – vary with elections	1.450	3.150	2.700	1.850	3.350
Support for individual electoral registration	0.080	0.120	0.500	1.000	0.560
Total Electoral Commission costs	16.330	18.270	18.200	17.850	18.910
Policy development grants ²²	2.000	2.000	2.000	2.000	2.000
Total planned resource	18.330	20.270	20.200	19.850	20.910
Capital					
Total planned capital	1.000	0.910	0.760	0.590	0.570
Total planned per year	19.330	21.180	20.960	20.440	21.480

²¹ See page 42 for an overview of elections and referendums in the period covered by this plan.

²² Policy development grants were established by PPERA for parties represented in the Commons by two or more sitting members. The grants are intended to assist parties in developing the policies that they will present in an election manifesto.

Costs of supporting UK general elections and referendums

It is not possible to predict the timing of UK general elections, nor (at the time of agreeing this plan) the timing of possible referendums in Scotland, Wales or across the UK. For this reason, our cost forecasts for the period covered by this plan exclude the costs of these elections and referendums; we would seek separate Parliamentary approval for the necessary resources as and when it is clear that they are required.

Our planning assumption is that the next UK general election will be held in May 2010 combined with the scheduled local elections. In the Commission's Main Supply Estimate 2010–11 an additional amount of £2.500m resource has been added to the total shown in Chart 2 to take account of this planning assumption, this is summarised in Chart 3.

Following a vote in the National Assembly for Wales in February 2010 the Commission has been working to finalise plans for administering a referendum in Wales. The vote formally started the process towards a referendum on further law making powers for the National Assembly. In light of the vote it is likely that the Commission will be asked to comment on the wording of the referendum question within the early part of 2010–11. It is also possible that the Commission will have to administer a referendum in Wales during the course of 2010–11, perhaps as early as the autumn, although the exact date of a referendum is currently unknown. The Commission's current planning assumption is that the referendum will be held in October 2010. The estimated cost to the Commission is £2.710m and this has also been added to the Commission's Main Supply Estimate 2010–11 and included in Chart 3.

Chart 3: 2010–11 summary of total planned resource and capital

	2010–11 £m
Electoral Commission core and planned variable resource	16.330
Policy development grants	2.000
UK general election	2.500
Referendum in Wales	2.710
Total planned resource	23.540
Planned capital	1.000
Total planned capital resource and capital 2010–11	24.540

The expected additional costs which would arise in relation to further UK general elections and possible referendums over the corporate plan period to 2014–15 are shown in Chart 4.

Chart 4: Possible costs of supporting UK general elections and possible referendums

	Range of additional cost	
	Minimum £m	Maximum £m
UK general election Range of costs depends on timing of the election, if it is 'stand-alone' or the type of electoral event it is combined with	0.0	3.5
Referendum Range of costs depends on the level of involvement of the Commission, and the designation of 'yes' and 'no' campaigns reflected in the potential levels of campaign activity		
UK wide referendum	7.8	16.0
Scotland	0.0	5.0
Wales	2.6	3.2

People

Our success and the way in which we manage and deliver our work relies upon the people who work for us; it is through them we are able to achieve change and deliver results.

Our human resources strategy supports our corporate plan and provides a framework to enable our people to deliver better business results and ensures that our staff are ready to meet future challenges. To date we had an average of 170 staff in post during the year and staff costs represented around 37% of our total budget.

Priorities over the next five years include attracting and retaining people by developing our position as an employer of choice. We will continue to create and sustain an environment that nurtures personal

learning and development, ensuring the workforce is equipped with the necessary knowledge, skills and experience to deliver our objectives. We will maintain our Investors in People recognition.

We will continue to work in partnership with the Public and Commercial Services Union to maintain good employee relations.

We will actively seek to have a more age-diverse workforce and encourage interest from all groups and areas of our society. We will continue to work with such groups as the Employer's Forums on age, disability and belief, Age Positive and Equality Britain. We will also retain and promote our Disability Symbol User status.

Infrastructure

Our facilities and accommodation strategy ensures that our office accommodation is fit for purpose and provides a safe and productive working environment. We will soon be reviewing our future accommodation needs and will use this opportunity to reduce costs and ensure continuing efficiency in our use of accommodation.

We will also ensure that our business continuity and disaster recovery arrangements remain relevant and up to date and are tested and audited, and that we continue to meet our Corporate Social Responsibility objectives.

Information is one of our most important assets and we aim to maximise its use through the deployment of technology and services that are robust, efficient, cost-effective and future-proofed. We also take the security of our information very seriously and have put in place policies, procedures and technology to protect it.

Over the next five years, we aim to use information and communications technology (ICT) to support better ways of working by providing improved ways for our staff to collaborate and to share and exploit our information. This will be done through the provision of new contact and case management systems, better tools for document management and an enhanced intranet. We will also review and enhance the systems we use to communicate with our stakeholders, in particular our website; and a major project to replace our party and election finance system is underway.

We also appreciate the contribution that ICT can make to providing value for money and we will be investigating how we can reduce cost through the use of new technologies as well as using the most effective methods to procure our systems and services.



Elections and referendums during the period of this plan

Election date		Voting system
2010		
By 3 June	UK: general election	FPTP
6 May	England: local government (some councils)	FPTP
Tbc	Wales: possible referendum	
Tbc	UK: possible referendum	
2011		
5 May	Scotland: Parliament	AMS
5 May	Wales: National Assembly	AMS
5 May	England: local government (some councils)	FPTP
5 May	Northern Ireland: Assembly	STV
Tbc	Wales: possible referendum	
Tbc	UK: possible referendum	
Tbc	Northern Ireland: local government	STV
2012		
3 May	London: London Assembly	AMS
3 May	London: Mayoral	SV
3 May	England: local government (some councils)	FPTP
3 May	Wales: local government	FPTP
3 May	Scotland: local government	STV
2013		
2 May	England: local government (some councils)	FPTP

Election date		Voting system
2014		
Tbc	UK: European Parliament	List PR ²³
1 May	England: local government (some councils)	FPTP
2015		
Tbc	UK: Parliament	FPTP
7 May	Scotland: Parliament	AMS
7 May	Wales: National Assembly	AMS
7 May	England: local government (some councils)	FPTP
7 May	Northern Ireland: Assembly	STV
Tbc	Northern Ireland: local government	STV

²³ STV in Northern Ireland

Voting systems

FPTP	First past the post
AMS	Additional member system
SV	Supplementary vote
STV	Single transferable vote
List PR	List proportional representation

Electoral systems in the UK

Election to	Voting system	Who is in charge of the legal framework?	Who is elected?	How long for? (next election year)	Electorate
UK Parliament (general election)	FPTP	UK Government (Ministry of Justice)	646 Members of Parliament (MP)	At least every 5 years	45,420,808 ²⁴
European Parliament	List PR in Great Britain (STV in Northern Ireland)	UK Government (Ministry of Justice)	736 (UK 72) Members of European Parliament (MEP)	5 years (fixed term, next one in 2014)	45,312,626 ²⁵ (UK only – June 2009)
Northern Ireland Assembly	STV	UK Government (Secretary of State for Northern Ireland)	108 Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLA)	4 years (fixed term, next one in 2011)	1,170,296 ²⁴
Scottish Parliament	AMS	UK Government (Secretary of State for Scotland)	129 Members of Scottish Parliament (MSP)	4 years (fixed term, next one in 2011)	3,919,219 ²⁴
National Assembly for Wales	AMS	UK Government (Secretary of State for Wales)	60 Assembly Members (AM)	4 years (fixed term, next one in 2011)	2,280,240 ²⁴
London Assembly	AMS	UK Government (Ministry of Justice)	25 Assembly Members	4 years (fixed term, next one in 2012)	5,419,913 ²⁶
London Mayoral	SV	UK Government (Ministry of Justice)	Mayor	London 4 years (fixed term, next one in 2012)	5,419,913 ²⁶
Local Councils	FPTP (England and Wales) STV (Northern Ireland and Scotland)	UK Government (Ministry of Justice) for local elections in England and Wales; Northern Ireland Office for local elections in Northern Ireland; Scottish Government for local elections in Scotland	More than 20,000 Councillors	4 years (fixed term, next ones dependant locally)	46,455,890 ²⁴

The Commission plays a key role in all elections that take place across the UK. As part of our role, we:

- run registration campaigns²⁷
- provide advice and guidance to political parties, third parties, candidates and agents, Returning Officers (ROs) and Electoral Registration Officers (EROs)²⁸
- set and monitor performance standards for EROs and ROs²⁹
- publish returns relating to the funding of parties and their expenditure during the elections (except local government elections)
- investigate allegations of non-compliance
- report on the administration of the election (except local government elections)

Voting systems³⁰

FPTP	First past the post
AMS	Additional member system
SV	Supplementary vote
STV	Single transferable vote
List PR	list proportional representation

²⁴ Source: Office of National Statistics data, December 2009.

²⁵ Source: Electoral Commission, collected as part of the 2009 European Parliamentary Elections research by Local Government Chronicle Elections Centre, University of Plymouth.

²⁶ Source: The 2008 elections results summary, Data Management and Analysis Group, Greater London Authority, May 2008.

²⁷ The Commission does not run a registration campaign for local government in Scotland.

²⁸ The Commission does not provide advice and guidance for local government elections in Scotland or Northern Ireland.

²⁹ In Great Britain only.

³⁰ For more information about each voting system visit the [aboutmyvote website](http://aboutmyvote.co.uk/how_do_i_vote/voting_systems.aspx) www.aboutmyvote.co.uk/how_do_i_vote/voting_systems.aspx.

Contact us

We are committed to working with stakeholders to help shape and inform our future direction and activities.

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