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Parliamentary Parties Panel minutes: 2 June 2015 You are in the Party panels
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the meeting and matters arising (ECPPP 03/03/2015) May 2015 polls IER EU Referendum
Policy Development Grants review May 2016 polls 'Hidden Cost of Elections' report
International observers at May 2015 polls Date of the next meeting Actions First
published: 2 June 2015 Last updated: 2 September 2019 Who was at the meeting Who was
at the meeting Conservative Party: Andrew Stedman, Compliance Manager (AS) Daisy
Woods (DW) Labour (Chair): Mike Creighton, Director of Audit and Risk (MC) Management
Margaret Lynch, Compliance Manager (ML) Liberal Democrats: David Allworthy, Head of
Compliance and Constitutional Support (DA) Darren Briddock (DB) Plaid Cymru: Emyr
Williams, Plaid Cymru (EW) Scottish National Party: Scott Martin, Scottish National
Party (SM) Ulster Unionist Party: Colin McCusker, General Secretary (CM) Electoral
Commission: Peter Wardle, Chief Executive (PW) Andrew Scallan, Director of Electoral
Administration (AS2) Alex Robertson, Director of Communications (AR) Bob Posner,
Director of Party and Election Finance & Legal Counsel (BP) Mazida Khatun,
Communications Officer (MK) Minutes, and actions of the meeting and matters arising
(ECPPP 03/03/2015) The minutes from 03/03/2015 were agreed with no clarifications
sought or noted. There were no other matters arising from the minutes. ML queried
whether there could be a conflict of interest in BP's appointment as joint Editor of
Schofield's Election Law. PW confirmed that this had already been considered by the
Commission. May 2015 polls PW reported that the May 2015 polls had generally been
well-run, despite a few problems in areas where there were multiple elections on the
same day. DA commented that the Commission's guidance while helpful, was best
understood by more experienced party officials and thought that it would be
beneficial to have a master index of all guidance to which everyone could refer. BP
replied that the Commission recognises there is a need for something like this and
that it will be discussing plans on a one-to-one basis with parties in the coming
weeks. He also cautioned that it might be that not everything the Commission and
parties would like to achieve could be done so for the May 2016 polls. MC felt that
the principle about legislation for elections being clear six months before the date
of the poll should also be applied to guidance. BP and PW confirmed that the
Commission is conscious of this and has a high threshold for changing or issuing new
guidance close to a poll. EW reported that in Wales, some candidates, confused by
rules around commonly used names had decided to change their name by deed poll. AS2
replied that the Commission had not issued new guidance on this matter, but had
reissued existing guidance when it became clear that there was some confusion
surrounding the rules. AS2 noted however, that some Returning Officers had told
candidates and agents that this was new guidance. ML concurred, saying that previous
guidance to candidates, agents and political parties had not been clear enough on
this matter. MC noted that he did not know of any instances when candidates'
nomination forms had been rejected due to confusion on this point. Action: Commission
to ensure that guidance for candidates, agents and Returning Officers about commonly
used names is consistent. SM also requested that guidance on whether candidates could
include the title 'Dr' on the ballot paper be clarified. Action: Commission
to clarify whether the title 'Dr' can be included on the ballot paper. ML also raised
concerns that Returning Officers and electoral services teams in some areas did not
realise that the party name could be on the ballot paper and were also unwilling to
accept bankers' drafts as they did not recognise them. Action: Commission to
reinforce guidance on ballot papers and acceptable forms of payment. CM also stated

that the process of uploading a new logo to the Commission's website had been very frustrating and drawn-out. Meeting the specifications for the logo was difficult, and it was unclear how the quality of the logo could be maximised. DA also remarked that logo resolution would decrease once uploaded to the website and that old logos were being stored in the cache, which could cause confusion. Action: Commission to look into improving logo uploads. AS2 added that sometimes printers had been eager to print ballot papers early, thus missing updates made to logos afterwards. The Commission will explore whether the time between the deadline for logo changes and the close of nominations should be revised in a report on the May 2015 polls. Action: Commission to look at processes around logo change in its report on May 2015 polls, to be published in July. AR reported on the Commission's public awareness campaign, which exceeded the Commission's target for reaching one million online applications to register to vote, by reaching two and half million applications. The Commission also had a target of one million additions to the register, and the result of the progress on this would be included in a report about public awareness at the May 2015 polls. IER MC requested that parties once again be given access to see the IER flags next to confirmed electors, to support efforts to encourage voter registration. PW responded that while the Commission was happy to have the support of parties on registration efforts, there was still no conclusion from the Cabinet Office as to whether having this information had had any effect on registration. He suggested that the PPP discuss this with Cabinet Office officials. AS2 informed the PPP that those unconfirmed on the new IER registers would be contacted by Electoral Registration Officers from summer 2015, using Household Enquiry Forms and also Invitations to Register. AS noted that it was very difficult for parties to keep up to date with the changes to the register and that they found it especially challenging to analyse over 360 registers in different formats. He added that where donors had dropped off the register because they were unconfirmed under IER, there should be discretion to accept their donations. MC was very concerned that students living in halls and attainments had been particularly adversely affected by IER, with large drop-off rates emerging. PW said that the December 2014 registers had confirmed what the Commission and others believed would happen to the number of students registered, but added that Electoral Registration Transformation Programme had funded EROs to issue Household Notification Letters. He also noted that work by the Commission, partners and EROs to register as many people as possible would continue beyond the end of the transition to IER. The Commission is looking at ways to further modernise registration EU Referendum MC suggested that the EU Referendum stay as a standing item on the PPP meeting agenda for the foreseeable future. Action: Keep EU Referendum on PPP meeting agendas. PW informed the PPP that before Committee Stage of the Bill, the Commission would put together a guide on some of the fundamental aspects of how referendums work, which would be shared with parties. Policy Development Grants review BP noted that all parties represented at the PPP had received letters from the Commission about the review of Policy Development Grants. The Commission's conclusion was that, having considered alternative schemes, none proved to be better than the current one. May 2016 polls MC asked whether the Commission would produce a voter information booklet for the Police and Crime Commissioner elections in 2016. AS2 responded that this was under review. AS2 reported that the Commission had suggested some changes to the ballot papers for the Mayoral elections in an effort to reduce the ballot paper rejection rate. ML also asked whether, with the franchise extension to 16 and 17 year olds in Scotland, there would be any child safeguarding issues that parties should be aware of. AS2 confirmed that this change would mean that 14 and 15 year olds were the

new attainers in Scotland, there would be some child safeguarding measures such as these attainers not being included in the open register. However, political parties would still have access to their details. BP added that this change in franchise meant there was a concurrent reduction in the age of permissible donors, although this was not expected to be a significant issue. 'Hidden Cost of Elections' report BP reported that the Commission would be publishing a report on the 'hidden costs of elections' in the coming weeks. This would illustrate the economic benefit of electoral law reform, so supporting the legal and practical case being put forward by the Law Commissions' project. This would be circulated to PPP. International observers at May 2015 polls PW stated that some reports from international observers at the May 2015 polls had been published and were generally positive. Date of the next meeting The date of the next meeting is 1 September 2015 – Liberal Democrats to Chair Actions Actions from June 2015 PPP meeting Action Owner Commission to ensure that guidance for candidates, agents and Returning Officers about commonly used names is consistent. AS2 Commission to clarify whether the title 'Dr' can be included on the ballot paper. AS2 Commission to reinforce guidance on ballot papers and acceptable forms of payment. AS2 Commission to look into improving logo uploads. BP Commission to look at processes around logo change in its report on May 2015 polls, to be published in July. AS2 Keep EU Referendum on PPP meeting agendas. MK Related content Party registration decisions View our decisions on political party names, descriptions and emblems View current applications View the political party names, descriptions and emblems which we are currently considering as part of our assessment process Donations and loans Find out about donations and loans to a political party, individual or other organisation Registers of unincorporated associations Download and view the registers of unincorporated associations