

Annual Report and Accounts 2021/22 You are in the Our plans and priorities section Home Our plans and priorities In this section Performance analysis 2021/22: Goal one Performance analysis 2021/22: Goal two Performance analysis 2021/22: Goal three Performance analysis 2021/22: Goal four Wales (devolved) annual report 2021/22 Scotland (devolved) annual report Focus on Northern Ireland Looking ahead to 2022/23 Using our resources to support the delivery of our goals 2021/22 Overview This section provides an overview of the Electoral Commission, our purpose, our performance during the last year and the key risks to achieving our goals. We have included summary financial information within the performance report. This is consistent with the financial statements, where more detail is available. The Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 (PPERA) established the Electoral Commission. We are independent of government and political parties and directly accountable to the UK, Scottish and Welsh Parliaments. We have prepared our 2021/22 Annual Report and Accounts in accordance with an accounts direction, set out on page 139, issued by HM Treasury under paragraph 17(2) of Schedule 1 PPERA. We have prepared the powers and sanctions report on page 54 in accordance with paragraph 15 Schedule 19(b) and paragraph 27 Schedule 19(c) PPERA. Preface and foreward Preface This year's elections marked 12 months since I joined the Commission as Chair, and went out in my first week to visit polling stations and observe first-hand the hard work that everyone in the electoral community does to deliver elections across the UK. I saw for myself the huge efforts that went into delivering Covid-safe elections last year, and gained insight into the work of the Commission, and the people we work with and support. Since that first week, I have continued to get out and meet members of the electoral community. I have heard from party treasurers and chairs, members of the UK's governments and parliaments, Returning Officers and electoral administrators and many others engaged in making our democracy function well. Emerging from these discussions are three key things people want to see from the Commission: high performance, cooperation and independence. We have been able to build these areas into our new five-year corporate plan, ensuring that our work over the next five years will meet the needs of all those we support. High performance is, of course, critical if we want to continue to command trust and confidence. We have developed stretching targets and an ambitious set of performance indicators to ensure, not only that the Commission delivers to a high standard, but that the wider system meets the needs of voters and everyone else involved in elections. We will measure public satisfaction with voting and voter registration, the timeliness of our enforcement work and the provision of guidance, and public perceptions of fraud and abuse. To achieve our targets, we need to work closely with other organisations, including local authorities, the police, parties and campaigners. We have a programme of support for electoral administrators and local authorities to assist them to deliver effective, resilient and consistent local electoral services. We also have a new support strategy for our regulated community to help parties and campaigners comply with electoral law and to ensure voters have transparency over the money given to and spent by these groups. As ever, the Commission's independence underpins this work. It is essential that we remain independent and free to take impartial decisions, informed by evidence. We will carefully consider the implications of the UK Government's Strategy and Policy Statement, due to be published later this year, and share our views via the scheduled consultation. Performance, cooperation and independence will be particularly important as the Commission implements the UK Government's Elections Act and the electoral agendas for Scotland and Wales over the

coming years. Alongside the electoral community, we will be working to deliver significant changes for voters, administrators and campaigners. We will continue to advise on timeframes, resources and impact to ensure the changes can be delivered as intended. Delivering the corporate plan and implementing the Elections Act will require a resilient and skilled team. I have been pleased to welcome to the Commission Shaun McNally CBE, our new Chief Executive, who together with our Senior Leadership Team is already making great progress on this work. I would also like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to Bob Posner, our retiring Chief Executive, who has been a calm, approachable and supportive leader over many years of service to the Commission. John Pullinger CB, Chair Forward Having recently joined the Commission as Chief Executive, I have been pleased to see the excellent work the Commission has undertaken to promote public confidence in the democratic process and ensure its integrity. This annual report sets out in detail the organisation's progress against its four strategic objectives, but there are a number of achievements worth highlighting. May 2021 saw a particularly complex set of polls take place across Great Britain, including elections to the Scottish Parliament, Senedd and London Assembly, with some contests postponed from May 2020. The additional challenge of the coronavirus pandemic brought uncertainty and changes for voters, campaigners and administrators who were required to observe public health guidance while participating. Commission colleagues worked with public health bodies and the electoral community to support all those involved, providing detailed guidance to campaigners and administrators and running public awareness campaigns to help voters understand their voting options. I was pleased to see that more than a million people registered to vote during the period of the Commission's voter registration campaign, 'Got 5?', and our research found that there was no decline in turnout, despite the pandemic. Changes put in place by the UK's governments, the Commission and electoral administrators helped support and reassure voters and campaigners. People were confident that they could vote safely at the elections, the overwhelming majority were able to vote using their preferred method, and overall, candidates and campaigners were able to put their case to voters face-to-face, online and through printed material. Shortly before the polls, Commission research found that public confidence in the running of elections hit a ten-year high. Eighty per cent of respondents said they were confident that elections in the UK are well run, and 86% were satisfied with the process of voting and registering to vote. This is a great outcome and something we must continue to build on. As well as overseeing elections, the Commission is also responsible for overseeing compliance and promoting a good understanding of the rules among the regulated community. Last year, colleagues carried out research with our regulated community to understand the challenges they face, and the kind of support and assistance they want from us in the future. We want to work with campaigners to deliver more proactive support and engagement, helping them to get ahead of any potential compliance issues. We have set up a new team dedicated to developing, testing and implementing a selection of new support tools. The team contacted a wide range of organisations and individuals from across the regulated community, including political parties large and small, non-party campaigners, and elected representatives. We heard back from nearly 350 people from across the UK who have provided us with information that will help us design a regulatory support strategy around their needs. This will help ensure we continue to enjoy high levels of compliance, which further supports voter confidence in our electoral system. Another key focus for the Commission over the last year has been the UK Government's Elections Act, the most significant piece of electoral

legislation in nearly 20 years. The Commission spent much of the last year providing independent, evidence-based advice to parliamentarians to support their consideration of the Bill's measures. Having now received Royal Assent, the Elections Act brings considerable changes for those delivering, participating and campaigning in elections in the UK. Our focus and that of our partners now turns to implementation, and ensuring all those involved in our democratic processes have time to understand and prepare for the new measures. Work on this has already begun and will be a significant priority for the years ahead. Plans are underway for a public awareness campaign to support new voter ID requirements, and our teams are looking carefully at how we can reflect the new legislation in our guidance. Finally, the last year has seen important changes to the Commission's funding and accountability arrangements. The Scottish Parliament and Senedd now fund the direct costs of delivering Commission functions. These arrangements have now been in place for a full year, bringing increased accountability and transparency for the Commission. You will notice these arrangements reflected throughout this document, both in the Commission's accounts and in the two devolved sections of the report. The work of the last year puts us in a strong position for the year to come. We have a new Corporate Plan, which sets ambitious objectives for the next five-year period. It will drive our work with the wider electoral community, with voters, campaigners, administrators, partners and the UK's governments to strengthen further trust in the electoral system. It will also drive collaboration and improvement within the Commission. In order to support our stakeholders, we need to support our staff. We will refresh our learning and development offering and invest in technology to ensure everyone has the skills, tools and support they need to deliver. Internal innovation will equip us to keep pace with external innovation. With new electoral legislation from the UK Government and ambitious reform agendas in both Scotland and Wales, there is a lot of change on the horizon. We are well placed to support the electoral community through these changes, and to make the case for any further reforms our system might need to ensure voters and campaigners can continue to participate with confidence. Shaun McNally CBE, Chief Executive and Accounting Officer

Our role The Electoral Commission is the independent body which oversees elections and regulates political finance in the United Kingdom.

Our vision and goals Our vision is to be a world-class public sector organisation – innovative, delivering great value and getting right what matters most to voters and legislators. In 2021/22 we worked towards achieving four goals: To enable the continued delivery of free and fair elections and referendums, focusing on the needs of electors and addressing the changing environment to ensure every vote remains secure and accessible To ensure an increasingly trusted and transparent system of regulation in political finance, overseeing compliance, promoting understanding amongst those regulated and proactively pursuing breaches To be an independent and respected centre of expertise, using knowledge and insight to further the transparency, fairness and efficiency of our democratic system, and help adapt it to the modern, digital age To provide value for money, making best use of our resources and expertise to deliver services that are attuned to what matters most to voters. This goal underpins and supports all of our work From 2022/23 we have updated our vision and strategic objectives in our Corporate Plan . As an organisation, we will work to promote public confidence in the electoral system and ensure its integrity. Our vision will be to ensure people trust, value and take part in elections. We plan to achieve this vision by delivering these five strategic objectives: Accessible registration and voting Transparent political campaigning and compliant political finance Resilient local electoral services Fair and effective

electoral law A modern and sustainable electoral system Our role across the UK We deliver for voters across all parts of the UK, with Electoral Commission offices in Belfast, Cardiff, Edinburgh and London. We work closely with the UK and devolved governments and, since April 2021, we now have accountabilities to the UK Parliament, the Scottish Parliament and the Senedd, and are funded by each of these for the work undertaken on elections under their devolved or retained powers. Our Governance Section includes more detail on our accountability arrangements and, from page 31, sets out specific reports in relation to our work for the Scottish Parliament and Senedd. Our 2021/22 year at a glance April to June 2021 We supported the successful delivery of the complex set of polls in May 2021, including those elections deferred from May 2020 due to COVID-19. Over one million people registered to vote in Great Britain during the period of our 'Got 5' voter registration campaign. Our 'Your Vote is Yours Alone' campaign raised awareness among voters of their rights and produced a suite of resources, for local authorities and other organisations to use to spread the message. We achieved an 87% response rate in our Pulse staff survey. This is 8 percentage points higher than the pulse survey in November 2020, and 1 percentage point higher than the last full 'all staff' survey in March 2020. John Pullinger started as Chair of the Electoral Commission. From 1 April the Electoral Commission became accountable to, and funded by, the Scottish Parliament and Senedd for devolved functions and elections. 64% of the public surveyed said they were satisfied with our public information service. July to September 2021 We supported the electoral registration canvass across Great Britain and in Northern Ireland, providing advice and support to Electoral Registration Officers and running a new public awareness campaign in Northern Ireland. We published three evaluation reports on the May 2021 elections, concluding the elections had been well-run despite the challenging circumstances. The Committee on Standards in Public Life published a report on the regulation of election finance, recommending important changes to the Commission's role and powers. The Elections Bill was published and introduced in the UK Parliament. We worked with officials to provide advice and expertise as required. We issued our regulatory support survey, to support us to understand our stakeholders' needs better. Dr Katy Radford was appointed as Commissioner for Northern Ireland. October to December 2021 We published guidance for electoral administrators, parties and campaigners in advance of the May 2022 elections. We published research looking at public attitudes to voting processes and the information available around elections. We published the campaign spending returns of political parties and registered non-party campaigners that spent £250,000 or less campaigning at the 2021 Scottish Parliament election or Senedd election. We submitted our first Wales Corporate Plan and estimate to the Llywydd's Committee and our first estimate to the Scottish Parliament Corporate Body. We consulted in Great Britain and in Northern Ireland on a new equality, diversity and inclusion strategy and on a refreshed approach to Equality Impact Assessments. January to March 2022 We published the campaign spending returns of political parties that spent over £250,000 campaigning at the 2021 Scottish Parliament election or Senedd election. We published our report on the 2021 Northern Ireland electoral registration canvass. We ran our first virtual pre-election seminar in Northern Ireland for candidates and agents contesting the May 2022 Assembly election. To support Returning Officers and Electoral Registration Officers in advance of the May 2022 elections, we held joint briefing events with the Electoral Management Board for Scotland and Wales Electoral Coordination Board We ran 'Welcome to your vote week' in Scotland and Wales in partnership with education bodies and youth groups, to provide information on registering and voting to 15-17

year olds. We launched a day of activity to target newly enfranchised foreign nationals in Scotland and Wales with information about registration and voting. Our year in numbers Used £17.2m of voted resources, including £0.7m capital spend Invested 65% of our net resource expenditure on staff costs (£10.8m) Achieved 67% employee engagement score Answered 5,324 public enquiries – a 18% increase on last year Responded to 150 Freedom of Information requests Published 412 donation and loan reports from parties and campaigners Notified 93.9% of applicants of the outcome of their registration application within targets based on complexity (simple applications: 35 working days, complex applications: 45 working days, Non-Party s: 5 working days) Completed 66.7% of investigations within targets based on complexity (simple cases: 90 calendar days, complex cases: 180 calendar days, highly complex: individual targets set on a case by case basis) Published 724 annual statement of accounts for political parties and accounting units Published 100% of our guidance products on time with no substantial errors Responded to 99.5% requests for advice from local authorities within 3 days Issued £58k of civil sanctions in our role as a regulator Performance analysis Jump to: Goal one Goal two Goal three Goal four Wales (devolved) annual report Scotland (devolved) annual report Focus on Northern Ireland Looking ahead to 2022/23 Using our resources to support the delivery of our goals Download our full Annual Report and Accounts 2021/22 Annual Report and Accounts 2021/22