

3. Putting voters first in Wales | Electoral Commission Search

3. Putting voters first in Wales You are in the Corporate Plan for Wales 2022/23 to 2026/27 section Home Our plans and priorities Corporate Plan for Wales 2022/23 to 2026/27 On this page Raising public awareness Removing barriers to registering and voting Ensuring laws for parties and campaigners are clear and followed Ensuring the electoral system works effectively First published: 25 April 2022 Last updated: 25 April 2022 Summary To have a healthy democracy, voters need to be engaged in our electoral process, and confident that elections are free and fair. We will work to increase voter engagement and confidence in Wales and the wider UK by: raising public awareness of the electoral process removing barriers to registering and voting ensuring laws for parties and campaigners are clear and followed ensuring the electoral system works effectively Raising public awareness Public awareness of the electoral system – including how to register and vote – is key to voter engagement and confidence. Our research demonstrates that public awareness of how to register and vote is currently high. In February 2021, 93% of those surveyed (both in Wales and UK wide) as part of our annual public opinion tracking survey stated they knew how to register to vote, and 92% were confident they knew how to cast their vote. It is important that we continue to maintain and increase this awareness, and we will continue to refine and deliver effective public awareness activity ahead of elections in Wales and other parts of the UK. We will ensure the information we provide to voters is accessible and transparent, keeping pace with developments in digital communications, and ensuring our public information services are tailored to voters' needs. We will develop and expand our learning work, producing political literacy resources to help people understand how to get involved in our democracy. We will continue to undertake public awareness campaigns and work with the wider electoral community and partner organisations. Following the extension of the franchise to 16 and 17 year olds and foreign nationals resident in Wales, we will continue to work to ensure new voters understand their eligibility and can confidently participate in the 2022 local government elections and 2026 Senedd election. We will also continue to work alongside all relevant partners to promote greater consistency in political education, and increase political knowledge and understanding amongst young people to ensure they can fully engage in our democratic system in Wales. This will include developing the good work already achieved with the publication of education resources and the further development of an education and learning programme in Wales. Removing barriers to registering and voting Our research shows that the current electoral system could be improved to meet the needs of all eligible voters. Results from our 2021 UK wide public opinion tracking survey show that people with a disability are more likely to be dissatisfied with the process of voting (10%) than those without a disability (6%). We already know what many of the barriers people experience are, but we will do further work to identify issues with registering and voting, and will then take action to address them. We will broaden the range of third sector organisations we work with to understand the challenges, and will collaborate with policy makers and other partners to identify solutions. This includes influencing the development of new policies, to ensure additional barriers are not introduced. We will deliver effective targeted voter awareness activities for the groups identified, and will specifically support under-registered groups to engage in the democratic process. We will also continue to explore the feasibility of modernising the voting process itself, aware of the changing needs of voters in our digital age. Ensuring laws for parties and campaigners are clear and followed The legitimacy of elections is dependent on clear laws which are understood and respected by parties and

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

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

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