

Government announces contingency measures for this year's electoral canvass to address coronavirus challenge

Press release

Minister for the Constitution confirms new measures for this year's annual electoral canvass, to address challenges posed by coronavirus.



New measures announced today address the unique challenges for this year's electoral canvass posed by coronavirus, Constitution Minister Chloe Smith confirms.

The annual canvass is a significant data-gathering exercise whereby electoral administrators update their electoral rolls – the lists of everyone in their community who is registered to vote – confirming the details of electors who should be added or removed.

- The government will amend the final date for this year's revised registers to be published, extending it from 1 December 2020 to February 2021.

This will allow local authority staff more time to complete their canvassing and maintain the accuracy of their registers, in light of practical consequences such as redeployed resourcing and social distancing.

- The government will amend its Parliamentary Constituencies Bill to allow for the upcoming, independent boundary review to be based on data from a verified version of electoral registers from March 2020 – and not from 1 December.

The next boundary review is set in law to begin in early 2021 and, as a rule, proposes updated and equalised UK parliamentary constituencies based on electoral registers as of 1 December 2020 – after the annual canvass is

usually completed.

The measure announced today will enable the four independent Boundary Commissions – on a one-off-basis – to use alternative data, from before government restrictions were put in place to tackle the pandemic. This removes any risk of using data potentially affected by the impacts of coronavirus – ensuring the review is based on the most accurate reflection of the UK electorate available.

The government has worked with the Office for National Statistics, who will collate (and ultimately publish) official data on the number of electors in all four nations as of the beginning of March 2020.

Minister for the Constitution and Devolution, Chloe Smith, said:

We have already made significant reforms to the canvass process, meaning that it is now easier than ever to complete.

Nonetheless, this government has been looking ahead throughout this pandemic, including drawing up contingency plans for those working in the electoral community.

Both measures I have confirmed today are sensible solutions to alleviate any concerns about public safety, while also strengthening the accuracy of the forthcoming canvass data and boundary review.

Changing the publication date for this year's revised electoral registers will have no negative impact on the conduct of the May 2021 elections, rather it will allow electoral administrators to better prepare for their safe and effective conduct.

More information on the measures announced today can be found [here](#).

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