

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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[Caroline Dinéage's keynote speech for the Founders Forum – Healthtech stage](#)

This is a double first (and a double honour!): to be opening the inaugural health tech stage at the first ever virtual London Tech Week. I hope you and your loved ones are safe and well in these new and uncertain times.

Over the last few months I've experienced the difficulties of both working

from home and trying to homeschool my children and the return to Parliament.

I've had the pleasure of joining a number of virtual roundtables with representatives from the tech sector, and I've been fascinated and delighted by the scale and breadth of tech's response to COVID-19.

I am unashamedly pro-tech and I want to thank you, the people that make up the tech sector, for all of the tireless work you have put in already to connect people to their loved ones and support networks; to deliver food and medicine; to enable patients to access their doctors; and to provide life-saving medical interventions. Health tech companies in the UK should be proud of the positive impact they have made on people's lives.

There are three points I want to make today.

Firstly, I want to highlight a few of the many successes that the UK tech sector has had during the current crisis.

Secondly, I want to talk about digitisation of social care, a topic close to my heart from my time as Minister for Care.

And then I want to talk about the role of health tech as we look to the future beyond the current crisis.

There have been many success stories in the UK tech sector. Thank you to the firms that have supported the NHS in innumerable ways- from the innovation involved in the detection and treatment of the virus, to the digital services and equipment the whole health and care workforce are now using.

I also want to highlight those in IT and tech who have been critical in the direct response to the health emergency, with dozens of British companies contributing towards the search for treatments and vaccines.

AI businesses have also been working with NHSX to gather and analyse data to help understand and predict the spread of the virus. This ultimately helps Government, NHS Trusts, and social care services to respond effectively, based on reliable evidence.

In my previous role I was the Minister for Care, in the Department of Health and Social Care, and the topic remains very close to my heart.

Health tech has begun to enter into this space- to give just a few examples: enabling patients to talk to their families remotely; enabling doctors to monitor remote wards; and helping care staff to carry out their jobs which are both so emotionally and physically labour intensive, and vital to our society.

We should not underestimate the scale of the problem: 15,000 care homes across England do not have adequate access to the internet; and social care reflects an intersectionality of so many different vulnerabilities. Patients in care homes are likely to have pre-existing conditions, may be more economically vulnerable, and may not have the skills, confidence or devices to be able to make the most out of what technology has to offer.

But despite these challenges, I remain optimistic, and I am excited to see what happens next. The tech revolution in the social care sector is just beginning: COVID-19 has accelerated the rate of change and tech businesses have risen to the unique challenges faced in social care.

We must continue to press forward and ensure this critical aspect of the health and care system is not left behind. And I encourage you all to continue engaging with DHSC and NHSX.

Finally, I want to look to the future as we begin to rebuild our economy, and slowly return to the new normal.

There are immense challenges facing our whole economy, and I am fully aware that the tech sector is not immune to these. My officials and I continue to work hard with colleagues across government to ensure that we as a Government understands the needs of the sector.

Let me reiterate that you have my full support. In April the Chancellor announced 1.25 billion pounds of funding to protect innovative firms. This is a concrete demonstration of Government's commitment and a direct outcome of our regular communication with the sector. It includes a £500 million investment fund for high-growth companies impacted by the crisis, and £750 million in grants and loans to support small and medium sized enterprises focusing on research and development.

I urge you to review the options on gov.uk/coronavirus if your business is in need of additional funding, and I am delighted to be supporting the Digital Boost platform, which will provide much-needed digital support for small businesses and charities in the UK that have been impacted by the Covid-19 crisis.

Report after report puts the UK as the tech capital of Europe. This is true of London, and of the UK beyond the M25.

There is incredible innovation happening across the UK: in my constituency of Gosport, I've seen small tech firms pivoting to address the crisis, manufacturing personal protective equipment for NHS and care staff. I hope that one of the benefits of remote working will be that more and more people feel empowered to build businesses without having to relocate to London or another major city.

The resilience and strength of the UK is an invaluable asset at this time. Just as our digital sectors are at the very heart of our response to COVID-19, they must be at the heart of our economic recovery too. We must rebuild in a way that is sustainable, inclusive, that celebrates and promotes diversity and that creates an economy that works for everyone.

Your spirit of ingenuity will help carry us through this current crisis and into a brighter future, and you have my full support as we map the route to recovery.

How DVLA's corporate induction process helps new starters

I applied for a job as a software engineer at DVLA because of my passion for coding. I have a degree in Mathematics, but after completing a Professional Graduate Certificate in Education I realised that coding was what I wanted to do. What also attracted me to the role is that it also allows me to study for an [MSc in software engineering at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David \(UWTSD\)](#).



Starting in September 2018 with 18 other eager students I had no idea what to expect, and I was naturally nervous (as we all are) on my first day. In the following days and weeks I would:

- be given a guide to my first 6 weeks, outlining all mandatory training
- be inducted into my new team
- attend several induction workshops

I fully expected my induction to cover security, data protection, health and safety, and how to conduct yourself at work – which it did. What surprised me was that we would also learn about unconscious bias, counterfraud, social media usage policies and sustainability. It was interesting and educational, and it gave me real insight into how DVLA values high standards of personal

conduct which is vital when you work in the Civil Service.

Team induction

Initially I attended UWTSD for 4 days a week with one day with my team in DVLA. This allowed me to develop my skills, for example, problem solving and team working at DVLA and UWTSD.

After a warm welcome and introduction to my new team during the [daily standup meeting](#) I was placed into a squad, which is a cloud team [using microservices architecture](#). I observed and learnt the tools, processes and overall structure of DVLA services, gradually increasing the hours to allow me to become more confident in my new role.

A key turning point in my induction was a training course I attended with the other students. Split up into 3 squads we were tasked to build a news, sport and weather application [working in an agile way](#). We were all given a category of the app (mine was the news category) and asked to develop a webpage to display sport information. I needed to use software tools like elastic beanstalk and languages like java to develop the functionality of a webpage. The course taught me how to work as part of a team towards a common goal and we did it with time to spare.

How the training has helped in my role

I'm now [working in the emerging technology lab](#) where we develop new ideas for the organisation's digital services.

Using the skills I built up through the induction process I was able adapt to a role which needed me to communicate with key stakeholders, develop prototypes and demos for products we were working on and [make learning fun for children in a school hosting day](#). I've also taken part in a project to investigate robotic process automation and chatbots where [I worked with my team to develop a prototype robot](#).

The induction allowed me to settle in, understand my role, develop new skills, and gain the knowledge to do the job properly. I really enjoy my work. It has also helped me transform from schoolteacher to civil servant. Through this, I now know the difference between working in a class of children to working in a squad of experts.

Next steps

I'm really happy in my role at the moment. In future I'd like a role where I can experience all aspects of the organisation. For example: making business decisions, developing services, provide training or interviewing new candidates. Who knows what the future may hold here at DVLA.

Roles at DVLA

DVLA will support you in reaching your full potential, offering rewarding and challenging jobs, training plans and ongoing development opportunities.

If you fancy a career at DVLA make sure you keep an eye on [Civil Service Jobs](#).

[Let's block ads! \(Why?\)](#)

[Highways England's pumps £85 million into getting people back on bikes](#)

Since 2015, the company has pumped more than £85 million towards the creation of 160 new and upgraded cycle ways across the country.

To mark National Bike Week, Highways England has announced the opening of new paths and funding for the creation of cycle routes in the South East and South West of England.

There's never been a better time to get on your bike and try out one of Highways England's cycle routes which criss-cross the country, helping to link villages, towns and cities.

Highways England Chief Executive, Jim O'Sullivan, said:

We care about everyone who uses our road network and we've made significant progress integrating cycling into the design of our schemes.

Improved opportunities for cycling creates obvious benefits for health, safety and the wider environment. And during the current pandemic it is especially important that we can provide opportunities for cyclists and pedestrians, not barriers to their journeys as people return to work.

Following unprecedented levels of walking and cycling across the country during the COVID-19 pandemic, the enhancements to the cycle network have given more people a choice when considering alternatives to public transport when they need to travel, making healthier habits easier and helping to make sure the road network is ready to respond to future increases in demand.

Cycling Minister Chris Heaton-Harris said:

We are determined to build a more resilient, sustainable transport network in the wake of COVID-19, with more people taking to two wheels as a healthy and green way to get around.

Bike Week is a great opportunity for people to give cycling a go and Highways England's new cycling infrastructure provides the chance for people to explore their communities.

In the latest initiative which opened on Tuesday 9 June 2020, Highways England invested £675,000 into Dorset Council's project to create improved cycle and footpaths, and upgraded crossings on both the A35 and Sea Road South.

As part of the scheme, a new, unsegregated footway and cycleway has been installed along Sea Road North, together with a new toucan crossing, while the existing puffin crossing on Sea Road South has been upgraded to a toucan crossing – all part of ongoing improvements to the North Bridport/Bradpole and South Bridport/Bothenhampton cycle route.

And this week it has also been announced that cyclists in West Sussex will soon benefit from a new 7-mile route linking Chichester to Emsworth travelling along the A259 corridor. The project is expected to begin construction next year and will connect villages along the corridor proving commuting and leisure facilities.

Cyclists, pedestrians and horse riders will see more benefits over the next five years, with £169 million set aside in Highways England's new Users and Communities fund. The company is using the fund to improve services for users and neighbours of England's motorways and major A-roads, including increasing the options people have for sustainable travel.

Highways England manages four designated funds, allocated by the Government, to deliver benefits above and beyond building, maintaining and operating England's strategic roads. From protecting the environment and enhancing the landscape around roads, to improving safety, reducing congestion, and supporting communities, the aim is to make a positive difference to people's lives.

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

Final phase of North East flood scheme starts

Natural flood management features – including three large storage ponds and new water dependent habitats – are being created on land at Coatham Wood upstream of Stockton.

Coatham Wood is next to Coatham Beck, which is a tributary of Lustrum Beck, which flows through Stockton town centre.

The features will store flood water during heavy rain that will then drain slowly back into Coatham Beck. The temporary storage will reduce water levels downstream.

New flood defences

The storage and slower release of water will work hand in hand with £3million in town flood defences which were previously completed in the summer of 2017.

This involved working with Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council to build new flood defences and improve existing ones in the town, and replace Londonderry Bridge.

Also completed as part of the project was a new area of habitat and upstream storage at Sixfields, next to Hartburn Beck, and additional areas of habitat creation at Coatham Wood and Burn Wood. These areas of new habitat have created a haven for wildlife to thrive as well as contributing to the storage of water through 'slowing the flow'.

Lustrum Beck Flood Alleviation Scheme reduces the risk of flooding to 150 properties in Stockton.

Work starts on storage basins at Coatham Wood

Final phase

For this final phase, the Environment Agency has joined forces with Newcastle University, Arup and Tees Rivers Trust to design the natural flood management features, which are being created on land owned by the Forestry Commission and managed by Forestry England.

It's expected the work, which his being carried out by contractor Ebsford, will be completed later in the summer. All work is being carried out within current Coronavirus government guidelines.

Dorian Latham, Lustrum Beck Project Manager at the Environment Agency, said:

It's exciting to be starting on site for the very final phase of the Lustrum Beck project. It's an innovative approach that provides benefits for flood risk management as well as significant opportunities for wildlife.

We are creating three large flood storage basins that will reconnect historic flood plain and the river at Coatham Beck. They are designed to slow and temporarily store excess water from the beck at times of heavy rain, reducing the volume of water closer to the town.

Lustrum Beck combines engineering solutions in the town centre and natural flood management upstream, which will work together to reduce the risk of flooding to residents, as well as creating vital habitat for wildlife to thrive and the community to enjoy.

Partnership working

The trees planted as part of the natural flood management scheme will be part of a Forestry Commission woodland management plan to make sure it develops to provide a diverse, sustainable habitat.

Alan Eves, Forest Management Director for Yorkshire Forest District, Forestry England, added:

The holding ponds at Coatham Wood complement a range of measures in place across the Forestry England estate.

Working in partnership with others enables us collectively to provide catchment scale flood alleviation that benefits local communities.

Addressing flood risk from the wider river catchment and increasing resilience to flooding through working with multiple agencies and the community has been the focus of a European Union funded project called FRAMES which has run alongside the Stockton scheme. Through this, The Tees Rivers Trust has been working with the Environment Agency and farmers to find opportunities for NFM measures.

It's important residents understand their flood risk and know what to do during a flood. For more information and to sign up to receive free flood warnings visit the [prepare for flooding web pages](#)