

POLITICAL PARTIES, ELECTIONS AND
REFERENDUMS ACT 2000



**THE SPEAKER'S COMMITTEE
ON THE ELECTORAL
COMMISSION**

FOURTH REPORT 2020

Re-appointment of Electoral Commissioners

*Presented to Parliament pursuant to paragraph 1(1) of Schedule 2
to Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000*

*Ordered by the House of Commons
to be printed 13 October 2020*

The Speaker's Committee

The Speaker's Committee is appointed in accordance with the provisions of section 2 of the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 to perform the functions conferred on it by that Act.

Membership

[Rt Hon Sir Lindsay Hoyle MP](#), Speaker of the House of Commons (Chair)

[Rt Hon Michael Gove MP](#), Minister for the Cabinet Office and Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster

[Luke Hall MP](#), Minister of State for Regional Growth and Local Government

[Craig Mackinlay MP](#)

[Christian Matheson MP](#)

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[Cat Smith MP](#)

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[William Wragg MP](#), Chair of the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee

Previous Publications

Third Report 2020 was published 21 July 2020 as HC 627 of Session 2019–21

Second Report 2020 was published 21 July 2020 as HC 626 of Session 2019–21

First Report 2020 was published 21 April 2020 as HC 277 of Session 2019–21

First Report 2019 was published 8 July 2019 as HC 2513 of Session 2019

Fourth Report 2018 was published 28 November 2018 as HC 1786 of Session 2017–19

Third Report 2018 was published 15 November 2018 as HC 1727 of Session 2017–19

Second Report 2018 was published 24 October 2018 as HC 1639 of Session 2017–19

First Report 2018 was published 14 March 2018 as HC 901 of Session 2017–19

First Report 2017 was published 27 February 2017 as HC 1031 of Session 2016–17

Second Report 2017 was published 6 November 2017 as HC 535 of Session 2017–19

Third Report 2017 was published 14 December 2017 as HC 688 of Session 2017–19

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Re-appointment of Electoral Commissioners

1. The Electoral Commission was established by Parliament as a body independent of Government. The Chair of the Electoral Commission and the other Electoral Commissioners are appointed by Her Majesty the Queen, following an Address from the House of Commons. The Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 (“the 2000 Act”), as amended by the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2009 (“the 2009 Act”), provides for the Electoral Commission to have nine or ten Commissioners.¹ The Commission comprises:

- Up to six ‘ordinary’ Commissioners who are subject to restrictions on political activity and who are recruited by competition, under a procedure put in place and overseen by the Speaker’s Committee; and
- Four ‘nominated’ Commissioners, who are persons put forwards by the registered leader of a qualifying party for consideration for appointment.

The current term of office of Dame Susan Bruce, the ordinary Commissioner with special responsibility for Scotland, comes to an end on 31 December 2020. The term of office of Dame Elan Closs Stephens, the ordinary Commission with special responsibility for Wales, comes to an end on 12 March 2021.

2. The Speaker’s Committee on the Electoral Commission is required by section 3 of the 2000 Act, as amended by the 2009 Act, to oversee the procedure for selecting candidates for appointment to the Electoral Commission. Under section 3(5A), this duty encompasses the recommendation of candidates for re-appointment. There is no presumption in the statute either for or against re-appointment.

Dame Susan Bruce

3. Dame Susan Bruce has served as an Electoral Commissioner since 1 January 2017. Sir John Holmes, Chair of the Electoral Commissioner, wrote to Mr Speaker in February 2020 asking the Speaker’s Committee to consider whether to recommend Dame Susan for re-appointment for a further three-year term. Sir John told us that Dame Susan had been “an effective and valuable Commissioner, bringing a lot of experience of electoral processes through her previous roles in local government in Scotland, and a lot of knowledge of the political scene in Scotland”. He also referred to Dame Susan’s role chairing the Commission’s Audit Committee. We consulted the Presiding Officer of the Scottish Parliament on Dame Susan’s re-appointment and, having considered this feedback, agreed at our meeting on 16 July 2020 to recommend Dame Susan for re-appointment, subject to the statutory consultation with party leaders.

Dame Elan Closs Stephens

4. Dame Elan Closs Stephens has served as an Electoral Commissioner since 13 March 2017. Sir John’s letter of February 2020 also asked the Speaker’s Committee to consider whether to recommend the re-appointment of Dame Elan for a further term of four years.

¹ S1(3) of the 2000 Act as amended by s6 of the 2009 Act

Sir John said that Dame Elan had been “a hard-working and committed Commissioner over the last three years, and has contributed a great deal at a time of great electoral change in Wales”. He also noted Dame Elan’s service as a member of the Commission’s Audit Committee. We consulted the Llywydd of Senedd Cymru on Dame Elan’s re-appointment and, having considered this feedback, agreed at our meeting on 16 July 2020 to recommend Dame Elan for re-appointment, subject to the statutory consultation with party leaders.

Statutory consultation

5. Section 3(2)(b) of the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000, as amended, also requires that the proposal to appoint (or re-appoint) a member of the Electoral Commission be the subject of consultation with the registered leader of each registered party to which two or more Members of the House of Commons then belong. Mr Speaker accordingly wrote to the leaders of the qualifying parties on 22 July 2020 about the re-appointment of Dame Susan and Dame Elan. No objections or concerns were received in response to the Speaker’s consultation.

6. Appointments to the Electoral Commission are made by Her Majesty on an Address from the House of Commons. The Speaker’s Committee commends to the House the re-appointment of Dame Susan Bruce for a further three-year term, and Dame Elan Closs Stephens for a further four-year term.