



PRESS RELEASE

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Command Paper published for open Register of Electors

The Government has published a Command Paper to amend the Parliament Act in order to provide for an open register of electors.

This will be presented to Parliament by the Deputy Chief Minister Dr Joseph Garcia.

The legislation in respect of the compilation of registers of electors in Gibraltar dates back in part to the 1950s. The procedure until now is that a canvass takes place door to door and a draft register of electors is produced. There is then a period of two weeks during which voters can check whether they are included in the draft register or not. The register is closed after the conclusion of this period and nobody else may be added to it even though an election could still be many months away. This has created issues in the past with people who did not include themselves in the register at the appropriate time when the narrow window to register was open.

When Gibraltar won the right to vote in European Parliamentary elections, the advantages of an open register of electors became apparent. The procedure for such elections was that the open or rolling register could be amended or updated at any time during its existence. The contrast between the two systems in place in for elections to the Gibraltar Parliament and for elections to the European Parliament could not be clearer.

The Government has always taken the view that the right of an eligible person to register to vote should be the paramount factor when a register of electors is being compiled and that this should not be curtailed by administrative considerations.

In line with this view, the Command Paper proposes that an initial canvass for a new register of electors is carried out in 2019. This would have happened anyway under the old system. The new register will then be published in June 2019. However, unlike on other occasions, the register will continue to be open until five days before a general election when it is then closed and published.

This means that the narrow window for voter registration between the publication of a draft register and the publication of the full register would be eliminated. The new register would continue to be open. This would allow more time for people to register, to change their details if for example they have moved house, or for the removal of electors who may have passed away in the interim.



The European elections register also provide for persons to vote by proxy. It is proposed that this provision be carried forward to the register for elections to the Gibraltar Parliament. In order to register as a proxy, a voter must be 18 years old or over and be included in the register. A proxy can vote only for 2 voters as well as immediate family.

The Clerk of the Gibraltar Parliament Paul Martinez has worked very closely with the Government and with the Opposition in bringing forward these improvements to the existing system.

The Command Paper will be open for comments until Friday 14 December.

The Deputy Chief Minister Dr Joseph Garcia said:

“The system in place for the registration of voters for elections to the Gibraltar Parliament is hopelessly antiquated. The proposed changes contained in the Command Paper take advantage of what we have learnt from holding European Parliamentary elections in order to update and modernise the practice in Gibraltar. It will be a lasting legacy of our participation in such elections as we now prepare to leave the European Union. I am very grateful to the Clerk of the Parliament for taking this matter forward in such a positive and constructive manner.”