



Moving the date of local elections in England in 2014

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The 2014 European Parliamentary elections were due to take place in June 2014, but have been moved to late May. As a result, the UK Government brought forward provisions to move the local elections, usually held on the first Thursday in May, to 22 May 2014. The [Draft Local Elections \(Ordinary Day of Elections in 2014\) Order](#) was laid on 26 June 2013. The House of Lords considered the draft Order on 24 July 2013 and approved it on 30 July 2013. The House of Commons approved the draft Order on 4 September 2013.

This Note sets out why the date of the 2014 European Parliamentary elections has been changed and gives details of the consultation about moving the date of the local elections in England. It also includes a list of those local authorities which are holding elections in 2014. There are no local council elections for councils in Wales and Scotland in 2014.

In 2004 and 2009 the date of the local elections was also changed so that the polls could be combined with those of the European Parliamentary elections in the United Kingdom. Before 2004 local and European elections were not combined.

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1 Background

A provision in the *Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007* amended the *Representation of the People Act 1983* by adding a new section 37A which empowers the Secretary of State (and Assembly Government ministers in relation to Wales) to move the day of local elections to the same day as that of the European Parliament elections when the two fall in the same year.

Section 37A allows the Secretary of State to change the date of the local elections in the year of European Parliament elections, but does not require him to do so. The Government must also consult the Electoral Commission before making an Order.

The Order to change the date must be made six months before the date of the local elections.

The date of the local elections was changed in 2004 and 2009 so that they were combined with the European Parliamentary elections held in those years. The Government has decided to combine the local and European elections in 2014. The European Parliamentary elections were due to be held from 5-8 June 2014 but this has been changed to 22-25 May 2014 by a European Council Decision. The European Parliamentary elections will now be held on Thursday 22 May 2014 in the United Kingdom; the local elections scheduled for 1 May 2014 will now also be held on that date.

2 Date of the European Parliamentary elections 2014

The Council of the European Union proposed moving the date of the 2014 European Parliament elections to avoid any reduction in voter turnout caused by the June Pentecost holidays. The European Parliament indicated in late 2012 that it would agree with this proposal as bringing forward the date of the elections to May 2014 would give the new Parliament time to prepare for the election of the President of the European Commission in July 2014. The European Parliament's website gives further details of the resolution:

The European Parliament adopted by 316 votes to 90 with 20 abstentions a resolution tabled by the Constitutional Affairs Committee on the elections to the European Parliament in 2014, noting that the new Parliament needs sufficient time to organise itself in advance of the election of the Commission President. For the new Commission to be ready to take office on 1 November 2014, the election of the Commission President should take place at Parliament's constituent part-session in July 2014. Accordingly, Parliament urges the European political parties to nominate candidates for the Presidency of the Commission and expects those candidates to play a leading role in the parliamentary electoral campaign, in particular by personally presenting their programme in all Member States of the Union. It stresses the importance of reinforcing the political legitimacy of both Parliament and the Commission by connecting their respective elections more directly to the choice of the voters. Furthermore, it calls for as many members of the next Commission as possible to be drawn from Members of the European Parliament, to reflect the balance between the two chambers of the legislature. The Council is requested to consult Parliament on holding the elections on either 15-18 May or 22-25 May 2014.¹

¹ [European Parliament resolution of 22 November 2012 on the elections to the European Parliament in 2014](#)

The draft European Council Decision which proposed moving the date of the 2014 European Parliamentary elections to between 22 and 25 May 2014 was considered by the House of Commons European Scrutiny Committee.² The Committee agreed with the Government's support for the change of date, which was:

... partly based on the possibility of combining the European elections with local elections in England which were originally scheduled to take place on 1 May 2014. These elections are for 160 local authorities, five directly elected mayors and a number of parish councils. Previous combination of these two sets of elections (in 2004 and 2009), the Minister says, shows that it is more cost effective to run them as a combined poll than two stand-alone elections on different days — in 2009 some £10m was saved — and helps to facilitate voter participation.³

The European Council agreed the Decision at a meeting of the Foreign Affairs Council on 14 June 2013.⁴

3 Consultation on moving the date of the English local elections in 2014

The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) published a consultation paper in March 2013 on whether the polls for the local government elections due to be held on 1 May 2014 should be moved to the same day as and be combined with the poll for the European Parliamentary Elections.⁵ Section 37A of the *Representation of the People Act 1983* requires the Secretary of State to consult the Electoral Commission and 'such other persons as he considers appropriate' before making an Order to combine the elections.

The DCLG noted in its consultation paper that it was more cost effective to run a combined poll rather than two stand alone polls; it estimated that by combining the polls the savings on electoral administration would be 'some £10 million' and summarised the other benefits of combination:

- it will be more convenient for voters to have to visit the polling station once only, meaning that more voters are likely to participate in the election;
- it will result in the election periods for the local and European elections running together and avoid the start of the European election period overlapping with the end of the local election period;
- it will reduce costs incurred by local authorities and central Government in funding the conduct of the polls and for political parties in distributing election material and canvassing voters; and
- those responsible for voter awareness campaigns, particularly the Electoral Commission and local authorities, will be able to concentrate their efforts in increasing awareness of one single election day.⁶

² [European Scrutiny Committee, Fourth Report, 18 June 2013, HC 83-iv, para 17](#)

³ [Ibid, para 17.4](#)

⁴ [Foreign Affairs Council press release, 14 June 2013](#)

⁵ [Moving the date of the English local Government elections to the date of the European Parliamentary elections in 2014: consultation](#), Department for Communities and Local Government, March 2013

⁶ [Ibid, p6](#)

The Association of Electoral Administrators published its response to the consultation paper and agreed with the Government but did raise a number of concerns about the complexity of electoral administration if polls were combined:

Certainly the procedures become more complex the more electoral events that are held on the same day, and the more polls that are combined. On balance, this is preferred to the difficulties and duplication of effort and resource involved in running separate elections and referendums within a few weeks of each other.⁷

On 26 June 2013 the Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Communities and Local Government, Brandon Lewis, announced in a Written Ministerial Statement that after considering all the responses to the consultation the Government had decided that the practical course of action was to move the local government elections due to be held on 1 May 2014 to the date of the European Parliamentary elections on 22 May 2014.⁸ The elections affected by the change of date are those

...to over 90 district councils, and all London boroughs plus a small number of parishes, as well as five mayoral elections.⁹

The draft *Local Elections (Ordinary day of Elections in 2014) Order* was laid on the same day.

4 The Local Elections (Ordinary Day of Elections in 2014) Order

The House of Lords considered the draft Order in Grand Committee on 24 July 2013.¹⁰ Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon, speaking on behalf of the Government, said that although the arguments about combining the elections were finely balanced the Government had decided that it was right to bring forward the Order:

The Government are clear that, with the European parliamentary elections on 22 May, just three weeks from the date on which the local elections would have been held, the case for moving the date of the local elections and combining them with the European ones is strong. Were the period between the elections longer, the decision might be less clear-cut. I stress that this does not necessarily create a precedent for any future set of elections.¹¹

Lord Ahmad acknowledged the concerns that had been raised about the increased complexities in the administration of elections and the risk of voter confusion and said that the Government did not take these concerns lightly but that it was confident that local authorities and their suppliers would have the capacity to manage the combination of the polls. He added:

I am also sure that sufficient public awareness work will take place to reduce risk of voter confusion both at the ballot box and when distinguishing between the different issues on which they are being asked to vote. We should not underestimate the intelligence of the electorate to grasp the issues and to be discerning at the polls. Indeed, it could be argued that holding two polls at the

⁷ [Formal response to the DCLG consultation on moving the date of English local government elections to the date of the European Parliamentary elections in 2014](#), Association of Electoral Administrators, 3 May 2013

⁸ [HC Deb 26 June 2013 c8WS](#)

⁹ [Ibid](#)

¹⁰ [HL Deb 24 July 2013 c GC481](#)

¹¹ [HL Deb 24 July 2013 c GC482](#)

same time is likely to increase, rather than decrease, interest in both sets of issues. In its response, the Electoral Commission agreed that the balance of argument lay with the date of the local elections being moved. This view was equally shared by the Association of Electoral Administrators. The Local Government Association and many councils also supported the move to elections on the same day.¹²

Lord Greaves, for the Liberal Democrats, and Lord McKenzie of Luton, for the Labour Party, supported the draft Order. The House of Lords approved the draft Order on 30 July 2013.¹³

The draft Order was considered by the House of Commons Seventh Delegated Legislation Committee on 3 September 2013.¹⁴ It was passed by the Commons on 4 September.¹⁵

The Order was made on the 6 September 2013 and came into force the same day.¹⁶

5 Combination of local and European Parliamentary elections in 2009

The local elections which were due to be held on the first Thursday of May in 2009 were moved to 4 June 2009 by the *Local Elections (Ordinary Day of Elections in 2009) Order 2008*. The Order was approved on 4 November 2008.¹⁷ In a Written Ministerial Statement on 7 October 2008, which announced the measure, the then Minister for Local Government, John Healey, said:

We believe that avoiding elections on two separate occasions within a month will be more convenient for voters, less costly for the taxpayer and more efficient for electoral administrators. As in 2004, holding the local elections alongside the European elections in 2009 could help boost voter turnout and improve the democratic process.¹⁸

A consultation paper had been published in May 2008, a year before the 2009 combined elections.¹⁹ The Electoral Commission recommended the combination of these polls.²⁰

A PQ on 19 November 2008 sought information about the savings that would be made by combining the elections on 4 June 2009. John Healy, responding to the question, said:

While it is difficult to provide an accurate estimate of such savings, the indications are that savings in the region of £10 million could result from holding the English local elections and elections to the European Parliament on the same day. To the extent that the costs of the European elections are reduced, this will be reflected in a lower call on the Consolidated Fund, while any reduction in the costs of local elections will reduce the call on councils' own resources.²¹

¹² [HL Deb 24 July 2013 c GC483-4](#)

¹³ [HL Deb 30 July 2013 c 1648](#)

¹⁴ [Delegated Legislation Committee, 3 September 2013](#)

¹⁵ [House of Commons Votes and Proceedings, 4 September 2013](#)

¹⁶ [The Local Elections \(Ordinary Day of Elections in 2014\) Order 2013](#), SI 2013/2277

¹⁷ [The Local Elections \(Ordinary Day of Elections in 2009\) Order 2008](#), SI 2008/2857

¹⁸ [HC Deb 7 October 2008 c7WS](#)

¹⁹ [Moving the date of English local government elections to the date of the European Parliament elections in 2009: consultation, DCLG, May 2008](#)

²⁰ [Electoral Commission response to the DCLG consultation on moving the date of English local government elections to the date of the European Parliament elections in 2009](#), July 2008

²¹ [HC Deb 19 November 2009 c512W](#)

The Electoral Commission was required to publish a report on the administration of the 2009 elections and this is available on its website.²² The Commission reported that the total budget set aside for funding the administration of the European Parliamentary elections in England and Wales in 2009 was £64.4 million.²³

6 Combination of local and European Parliamentary elections in 2004

The date of the local elections in 2004, 6 May, was changed to 10 June 2004 so that they could be combined with the European Parliament elections. At this time the Government used powers in the *Local Government Act 2003* to move the date. The then Minister for Local Government and the Regions, Nick Raynsford, announced the decision in a Written Ministerial Statement on 6 May 2003:

I have today placed in the Library of the House a summary of the responses which the Government received to their consultation paper "Combining English Local Authority, Greater London Authority and European Parliament Elections in 2004".

A total of 364 responses were received to the consultation exercise. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and the Lord Chancellor's Department have analysed these responses very carefully.

The consultation document sought views on five issues.

The first issue was whether respondents agreed with the proposal to combine the local and GLA elections with the European Parliamentary Elections in 2004. Of those expressing a view, 172 of those responses agreed with this proposal, while 138 disagreed.

The consultation document secondly asked what practical issues respondents foresaw in combining most effectively the local (and, where applicable, parish) elections with the European Parliamentary Elections, and thirdly what practical issues they foresaw in combining most effectively the GLA elections with the European Parliamentary Elections. Respondents raised a range of different practical issues, relating to the operation of the elections themselves and council business more widely, such as the terms of office of members and the date of annual meetings.

The consultation document asked fourthly what action should be taken to address any practical issues raised. Respondents, including electoral administrators, have put forward a number of suggestions. Having considered the nature of the practical issues raised and the range of solutions available, the Government believe that there is no practical impediment to the combination of local, GLA and European Parliamentary Elections in 2004.

In the light of the responses to these four issues and the Government's analysis of the issues raised, our current intention remains to exercise the order-making provisions we are seeking in the Local Government Bill, if these are enacted by Parliament, to allow the combination of local elections in 2004 with the next elections to the European Parliament, which are due to take place on 10 June 2004.²⁴

²² [The European Parliamentary and local government elections 2009: report on the administration of the 4 June 2009 elections](#), Electoral Commission, October 2009

²³ Ibid, p57

²⁴ HC Deb 6 May 2003 c29WS

6.1 Local elections in 2001

The date of the local elections in 2001 was moved to 7 June because of the disruption in rural areas caused by the outbreak of foot and mouth disease; primary legislation had to be introduced in April 2001 to make provision for this. [Library Research Paper 01/44](#) gives further background. The general election was also held on 7 June 2001, although this was not announced until 8 May 2001. If there had not been the outbreak of foot and mouth disease the general election would presumably have been held on the scheduled date for the local elections, 3 May 2001.

6.2 European Parliamentary elections 1979 – 1999

There was no combination of local elections with the European Parliamentary elections in 1979, 1984, 1989, 1994 and 1999. In 1979 the local elections were held on 3 May 1979, the same day as the general election and the European Parliament elections were held on 7 June 1979.

7 List of local elections to be held in England in 2014

The Explanatory Memorandum to the draft [Local Elections \(Ordinary day of Elections in 2014\) Order](#) lists the local elections in England that are scheduled to be held in 2014.²⁵ There will be elections by thirds to over ninety shire and unitary district councils in England and to all metropolitan district councils, plus whole council elections to all London boroughs and a small number of parishes, as well as five mayoral elections. The list is reproduced in the Appendix below.

²⁵ [Explanatory Memorandum to the draft Local Elections \(Ordinary Day of Elections in 2014\) Order](#)

Appendix: elections to principal councils in 2014

(List taken from the annex to the [Explanatory Memorandum to the draft Local Elections \(Ordinary Day of Elections in 2014\) Order](#))

Shire (two-tier) district councils electing by thirds

1. Amber Valley
2. Basildon
3. Basingstoke and Deane
4. Bassetlaw
5. Brentwood
6. Broxbourne
7. Burnley
8. Cambridge
9. Cannock Chase
10. Carlisle
11. Castle Point
12. Cherwell
13. Chorley
14. Colchester
15. Craven
16. Crawley
17. Daventry
18. Eastleigh
19. Elmbridge
20. Epping Forest
21. Exeter
22. Gloucester
23. Great Yarmouth
24. Harlow
25. Harrogate
- 26. Hart**
27. Havant
28. Hertsmere
29. Huntingdonshire
30. Hyndburn
31. Ipswich
32. Lincoln
33. Maidstone
34. Mole Valley
35. Newcastle-under-Lyme
36. North Hertfordshire
37. Norwich
38. Pendle
39. Preston
40. Purbeck
41. Redditch
42. Reigate and Banstead
43. Rochford
44. Rossendale

45. Rugby
46. Runnymede
47. Rushmoor
48. St Albans
49. South Cambridgeshire
50. South Lakeland
51. Stevenage
52. Stratford-on-Avon
53. Stroud
54. Tamworth
55. Tandridge
- 56. Three Rivers**
57. Tunbridge Wells
58. Watford
59. Welwyn Hatfield
60. West Lancashire
61. West Oxfordshire
62. Weymouth and Portland
63. Winchester
64. Woking
65. Worcester
66. Worthing
67. Wyre Forest

Unitary (single-tier) district councils electing by thirds

1. Blackburn with Darwen
2. Derby
3. Halton
4. Hartlepool
5. Hull
- 6. Milton Keynes**
7. North East Lincolnshire
8. Peterborough
9. Plymouth
10. Portsmouth
11. Reading
- 12. Slough**
13. Southampton
14. Southend on Sea
15. Swindon
16. Thurrock
17. Warrington
18. Wokingham

Shire (two-tier) district councils electing by halves

1. Adur
2. Cheltenham
3. Fareham
4. Gosport
5. Hastings

6. Nuneaton and Bedworth
7. Oxford

Metropolitan district councils electing by thirds

1. Barnsley
2. Birmingham
3. Bolton
4. Bradford
5. Bury
6. Calderdale
7. Coventry
8. Doncaster
9. Dudley
10. Gateshead
11. Kirklees
12. Knowsley
13. Leeds
14. Liverpool
15. Manchester
16. Newcastle Upon Tyne
17. North Tyneside
18. Oldham
19. Rochdale
20. Rotherham
21. Salford
22. Sandwell
23. Sefton
24. Sheffield
25. Solihull
26. South Tyneside
27. St Helens
28. Stockport
29. Sunderland
30. Tameside
31. Trafford
32. Wakefield
33. Walsall
34. Wigan
35. Wirral
36. Wolverhampton

London Boroughs electing by whole council

1. Barking & Dagenham
2. Barnet
3. Bexley
4. Brent
5. Bromley
6. Camden
7. Croydon
8. Ealing
9. Enfield

10. Greenwich
- 11. Hackney**
12. Hammersmith & Fulham
13. Haringey
14. Harrow
15. Havering
16. Hillingdon
17. Hounslow
18. Islington
- 19. Kensington & Chelsea**
20. Kingston Upon Thames
21. Lambeth
22. Lewisham
23. Merton
24. Newham
25. Redbridge
26. Richmond Upon Thames
27. Southwark
28. Sutton
- 29. Tower Hamlets**
30. Waltham Forest
31. Wandsworth
32. Westminster

London boroughs holding elections for the directly elected mayor

1. Hackney
2. Lewisham
3. Newham
4. Tower Hamlets

Shire (two-tier) district councils holding elections for the directly elected mayor

1. Watford

Councils shown in bold are likely to hold whole council elections in 2014 to introduce revised electoral arrangements (changes to the number of councillors and the names and boundaries of wards)