

THE ELECTORAL OFFICE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

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PRESS RELEASE

CONTINUOUS REGISTRATION REPLACES ANNUAL CANVASS

The Electoral Office for Northern Ireland has announced details of Continuous Registration, the new process that will replace the annual canvass as a method of maintaining the Electoral Register.

Regulations, that are expected to become law later this month, will mean that The Chief Electoral Officer will be able to use information available from government agencies as a trigger to send a letter reminding people who change their name or address or become eligible to vote, that they must inform the Electoral Office of the changes. The details of people who die will be automatically removed from the register.

Continuous Registration will help ensure that individuals retain their right to vote and benefit from the many other advantages from being on the Electoral Register.

Speaking of the decision, Douglas Bain, Chief Electoral Officer said:

“In Northern Ireland we have by far the best electoral registers anywhere in these islands. Accurate and comprehensive registers are the foundation of the electoral process and I am confident that the system of continuous registration, which replaces the annual canvass, will result in even better electoral registers.”

Notes to Editors

The annual canvass of electors was abolished by the Northern Ireland (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2006. The last annual canvass was in 2006. The next canvass is likely to take place in 2010 with canvasses taking place every ten years thereafter.

Regulations, that are expected to become law later this month, will empower the Chief Electoral Officer to obtain certain information from district councils, the Housing Executive, the Registrar General of Births and Deaths in Northern Ireland, the Northern Ireland Central Services Agency and the Department of Work and Pensions.

District councils and the NIHE will provide names and addresses of the current and former occupants of buildings and of changes of use of buildings. The Registrar General will provide name, address and date of birth and death information on those who have died. The Department of Work and Pensions, who are responsible for the National Insurance Scheme, will provide information on those attaining registration age and National Insurance numbers of all those in Northern Ireland. The Central Services Agency, who keep the central records of all those who use the Health Service in Northern Ireland, will provide information on changes of name or address and of deaths. There will be strict controls both on the information that can be passed to the Electoral Office and on how they can use the information received.

Those who do not register cannot vote and are likely to have difficulty in obtaining credit. Those who fail to provide the Electoral Office with the necessary information are committing a criminal offence and risk prosecution and a fine of up to £1,000.