

THE ELECTORAL OFFICE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

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PRESS RELEASE

OVERNIGHT COUNTING OF VOTES

Douglas Bain, the Chief Electoral Officer for Northern Ireland, today announced that following consideration of the responses to a public consultation exercise, the counting of votes at future Westminster Parliamentary elections will take place overnight as it does in most other parts of the United Kingdom.

Speaking of the decision Douglas Bain said:

“Bringing this process into line with other parts of the UK means that Northern Ireland’s 18 Members of Parliament will no longer be the last to be elected. Changing to overnight counting of votes at Westminster elections allows the results to be available much quicker, and people will be able to read the results in their morning papers.”

Notes for editors

1. Traditionally the counting of votes in Northern Ireland has started the day after the election. In Great Britain, with a few exceptions, counting starts immediately after the close of poll and continues overnight.
2. Whilst in the past there were sound reasons for not counting overnight these have now been overcome or have disappeared.
3. The Electoral Office consulted on the proposal to move to overnight counts before Christmas. The responses received were overwhelmingly in favour of the change.

4. The change may not be possible in a small number of the rural constituencies due to the time taken to bring in all the ballot boxes.
5. The change currently only relates to the Westminster elections and not elections operating under the single transferable vote system of proportional representation.
6. The issue of electronic counting of votes at all other elections will be further considered following the Scottish elections in May at which e-counting is to be used.
7. A copy of the response and consultation paper is attached and will be made available on the Electoral Office website www.eoni.org.uk