



### Executive Summary

- a. This paper sets out a review undertaken by the Electoral Office of issues arising at the 2023 Local Elections. The review specifically looked at the recent law change<sup>\$</sup> that required electors who went online to register to vote to then be provided a Digital Registration Number which they must use when applying for a postal/proxy vote.
- b. It is important to remember that by law, probity of postal/proxy votes is much higher in Northern Ireland than in Great Britain. **In Great Britain 21% of votes cast in the 2019 General Election were postal votes (6.9 million postal votes) compared to 1.7% in Northern Ireland (14,100 postal votes) – a twelve-fold difference.** This difference drives greater probity in the Northern Ireland postal/proxy vote process but can also act to make voting more difficult in Northern Ireland than in Great Britain.
- c. The review found that since 2018 around 85% of electors in Northern Ireland have gone online to register to vote. The 2018 law<sup>\$</sup>, which set up online voter registration, meant that these electors have been issued with a Digital Registration Number. The 2018 law required that this Digital Registration Number must be included in subsequent postal or proxy vote applications. The “partial” nature of the Digital Registration Number law (not all electors register to vote online and thus not all electors need to supply a Digital Registration Number when applying for an absent vote) is at the heart of the issues the public faced in the 2023 Elections.
- d. During the 2023 Local Elections 21,294 applications for a postal/proxy vote were made. Of these, 5,118 applications were rejected, as these electors originally went online to register to vote & then did not supply their Digital Registration Number when applying for postal/proxy vote.
- e. The review found a variety of reasons why postal/proxy vote applications were made without a Digital Registration Number. Two of the main reasons were
  - (i) some members of the public are unaware that they have a Digital Registration Number. This is related to these electors not remembering whether that they originally went online to register to vote or not; and

- (ii) some members of the public are unaware of the requirement, if they originally went online to register to vote, to include their Digital Registration Number on their postal/proxy vote application.

These and other reasons are discussed in detail in the report.

- f. **The Digital Registration Number legislation and its partial requirement for absent votes is unique to Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom.** In addition the “partial” nature of Digital Registration Number law in relation to absent votes is difficult for the public to understand. The only permanent solution, in my view, is for the Government to reform the Digital Registration Number law. This is discussed in more detail in the report.
- g. However any law reform will take time to develop and implement. Therefore, given this lead-in time I have set out a number of short-term administrative mitigations I plan to undertake. The mitigations relate to three themes:
  - **Better Communication** of elections, electoral registration & the Digital Registration Number requirement to the public. Subject to their agreement, an element of this work will be undertaken by the Electoral Office in partnership with the Electoral Commission who are responsible for communication of elections in Northern Ireland;
  - **Better Technology** to help the public determine whether they are registered to vote and, if they went online to register to vote, to get their Digital Registration Number;
  - **Better Absent Vote Processes** to help the public fill out their postal or proxy vote application forms. This would create improved ways for the Electoral Office to inform electors whether their postal or proxy application was approved.

More details on the planned mitigations are set out in detail in the report.

**Dr David Marshall**

**Chief Electoral Officer (Northern Ireland)**

**January 2024**

\$ The Representation of the People (Electronic Communications and Amendment) (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2018 – see <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2018/699/contents/made>

## 1. Introduction

1. Local Elections were held in Northern Ireland on 18 May 2023. At the Local Elections, electors could vote in one of three ways:
  - a. **in person** in a Polling Place, or
  - b. by appointing someone to vote on their behalf at their Polling Place (a **proxy vote**) or
  - c. **by post** after making a prior application to the Electoral Office.

Taken together proxy and postal votes are labelled **absent votes**.

2. A total of 1,380,372 people were registered to vote at the 2023 Local Elections. Of this 755,263 people voted (55% turnout). The vast majority (98.3%) of people voted at a Polling Place (742,466)<sup>1</sup>. In addition, 12,797 electors, or 1.7%, voted by post.
3. Several decades ago, there were marked concerns about electoral fraud in Northern Ireland. This resulted in Northern Ireland specific laws being introduced<sup>2</sup> by the Government to help combat local electoral fraud. The main local measure introduced in the 2002 legislation<sup>2</sup> was photo identification for voters at Polling Places. This has been introduced recently in Great Britain and some form of voter identification is now law in most developed democracies around the world (see [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Voter\\_identification\\_laws](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Voter_identification_laws)).
4. Over the last decade the Electoral Office has gained access to and makes use of high-quality official data from public bodies (National Insurance Register, Health Register, Schools Register etc..) to ensure electoral registration and absent vote application processes are robust. These measures, coupled with procedural and law changes, have resulted in greater confidence in all aspects of the electoral system in Northern Ireland.
5. In the last few years, the Government has taken a further step in legislating for **online voter registration in Northern Ireland**. As Chief Electoral Officer I welcome this development as it has greatly helped my Office to undertake the duties specified in [the Representation of the People Act \(1983\)](#). Online voter registration services are discussed further below.

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<sup>1</sup> Within this will be the votes of the 7,471 proxies appointed for the 2023 Local Election. Not all of these proxies will have cast the vote allocated to them and it is not possible to disaggregate the number of proxies out of the total number of votes cast in person.

<sup>2</sup> The Electoral Fraud (Northern Ireland) Act 2002 see <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/13/contents>

## 2. Online voter registration

6. Following introduction in Great Britain in 2014, online voter registration was introduced in Northern Ireland in 2018. **Online voter registration is where the public fills out a digital form to register to vote – this does not mean online voting - just online registration.**
7. To support this change, the Government passed Northern Ireland specific regulations to allow the public to register to vote online<sup>3</sup>. Following the 2021 Electoral Register canvass around 85% of electors here have gone online to register to vote using [www.gov.uk/register-to-vote](http://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote).
8. As part of the new law, electors in Northern Ireland, who have gone online to register to vote, are issued with a Digital Registration Number. The elector's Digital Registration Number is attached to their confirmation mail/email which sets out details about the Digital Registration Number. A sample confirmation letter is attached as Annex A.
9. The rest of this paper sets out
  - (i) how absent (postal/proxy) voting works in Northern Ireland;
  - (ii) a discussion of the new Digital Registration Number law in Northern Ireland;
  - (iii) the mitigations the Electoral Office are planning for future elections to help the public overcome the impact of the Digital Registration Number law on postal/proxy votes.

## 3. Voting by Post / Proxy in Northern Ireland

10. To vote by post or by proxy in Northern Ireland the registered elector must fill out a paper application form requesting a postal or proxy vote and get their application approved by the Electoral Office. Unlike Great Britain, there is no facility for electors in Northern Ireland to apply online for a postal or proxy vote. The paper postal/proxy vote application form can relate to a permanent or temporary absent vote. This is discussed further below.

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<sup>3</sup> The Representation of the People (Electronic Communications and Amendment) (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2018 – see <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2018/699/contents/made>

### *Permanent postal or proxy votes*

11. The law in Northern Ireland allows **three main groups of people**<sup>4</sup>, who cannot attend their allocated Polling Place, to apply and be approved for a **long-term** postal or proxy vote (known as a **permanent postal vote** or **permanent proxy vote**). These are:
- electors with a long-term **Disability**; or
  - electors who may be away from home for reasons of **Education**; or
  - electors who may be away from home for reasons of **Work**.
12. The permanent application form associated with long-term disability is attached as Annex B. Permanent postal/proxy vote application forms are available on the Electoral Office website<sup>5</sup>. The elector must fill in and post back the application form to the Electoral Office. Currently there are 8,479 electors with a permanent postal vote and 1,702 electors with a permanent proxy vote out of an Electoral Register of 1.38m electors.
13. As noted, the 2018 Regulations<sup>3</sup> introduced a new additional requirement for electors, who originally went online to register to vote, to supply their Digital Registration Number on any subsequent permanent postal/proxy vote application form.

### *Temporary (next election) postal or proxy votes*

14. Alternatively, an elector can apply for a postal or proxy vote for the upcoming election only, known as a **temporary postal vote** or **temporary proxy vote**. The elector can only apply on **illness or other temporary reason grounds** (e.g. holiday). Forms for a temporary postal/proxy vote are made available on the Electoral Office website in the lead up to each election.
15. Again the 2018 Regulations<sup>3</sup> also required electors, who went online to register to vote, to supply their Digital Registration Number when applying for a temporary postal/proxy vote. Around 20,000 people apply for a temporary postal or proxy vote at each election.

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<sup>4</sup> There is a further smaller group of "Special Category" electors. This group includes, but is not limited to, electors in HM Forces, electors previously resident in Northern Ireland now living outside the UK, electors in Government roles and anonymous electors.

<sup>5</sup> The relevant forms are on the Electoral Office website at

- (i) <https://www.eoni.org.uk/getmedia/24f54d9d-d439-4f0c-bba9-e114b8bf6a37/Indefinite-Absent-Vote-Application-form-Disability-CURRENT>
- (ii) [https://www.eoni.org.uk/getmedia/6d587799-c823-4f22-ab84-9a1ede7bec52/Indefinite-Absent-Vote-Application-form-Education-CURRENT\\_2](https://www.eoni.org.uk/getmedia/6d587799-c823-4f22-ab84-9a1ede7bec52/Indefinite-Absent-Vote-Application-form-Education-CURRENT_2)
- (iii) [https://www.eoni.org.uk/getmedia/fc40c7b8-b709-49e5-9363-d2d0d1d31ec2/Indefinite-Absent-Vote-Application-form-Employment-CURRENT\\_2](https://www.eoni.org.uk/getmedia/fc40c7b8-b709-49e5-9363-d2d0d1d31ec2/Indefinite-Absent-Vote-Application-form-Employment-CURRENT_2)

16. There are important points to remember about the probity of absent vote processes:

- as part of any register to vote application, **the Electoral Office checks and verifies all register to vote applications against official datasets** (the National Insurance Register, the Health Card Register, Marriage & Death Certificate Register & other public sector datasets). This helps to secure the Northern Ireland Electoral Register and ensure registrations are *bona-fide*. **This checking process has been embedded over the last decade and has enhanced the accuracy of the Northern Ireland Electoral Register;**
- in Northern Ireland electors **applying for postal or proxy vote must supply a valid reason** they cannot attend their Polling Place on Election Day (see above). If the reason given is not robust then the application is refused. **In Great Britain, an elector can obtain a postal or proxy vote with no reason required<sup>6</sup>.** Thus there is an enhanced (over Great Britain) level of checking to ensure the postal/proxy vote application is robust;
- in total, 21% of votes cast in the 2019 General Election in Great Britain were postal votes (6.9 million votes cast) – this compares to 1.7% of votes cast in the 2023 Northern Ireland Local Elections (12,800 votes cast). Thus, there is a marked difference in volume between Northern Ireland and Great Britain. **This strongly indicates that any concerns about large levels of postal vote fraud in Northern Ireland are ill-founded when considered in a UK context;**
- in the Republic of Ireland postal votes are similar in nature to Northern Ireland – the Republic of Ireland have a further system known as special voting which serves a similar purpose to proxy voting in Northern Ireland. At the last Dáil Éireann election (2020) there were 19,687<sup>7</sup> votes cast in the Republic of Ireland through either postal or special voting, or 0.9% of votes cast in the 2020 election;

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<sup>6</sup> House of Commons report October 2023 <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-7419/> . The current Great Britain absent vote system has been labelled “**postal votes on demand.**” Absent voting was introduced in the UK after World War 1. This was to support members of HM Forces living overseas. There have been various changes in Great Britain absent vote law with “postal votes on demand” being introduced following the Representation of the People Act (2000) and the Electoral Administration Act (2006). This has been the system in Great Britain since then. The number of postal votes in Great Britain has risen markedly over the last number of elections to reach around 20% of votes cast in Great Britain today – in comparison 1.7% of votes in Northern Ireland are postal votes.

<sup>7</sup> See [https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/electoralProcess/electionResults/dail/2020/2020-05-01\\_33rd-dail-general-election-results\\_en.pdf](https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/electoralProcess/electionResults/dail/2020/2020-05-01_33rd-dail-general-election-results_en.pdf) for more information.

- in Northern Ireland when **an elector posts back their temporary or permanent postal/proxy vote application form, then their personal data (Full Name, Full Address, Full National Insurance Number and Full Date of Birth) on the form are compared to data on the Northern Ireland Electoral Register.** If the data on the application form does not match the electoral register, then the application is refused. **This acts to give a further level of checking to ensure the postal/proxy vote application is robust;**
- if approved, **postal ballot papers or proxy vote letters for the upcoming election are then mailed out to the named elector or proxy at the specified address in a sealed envelope.** This gives two layers of protection:
  - the Electoral Office uses the [Pointer address database](#) from the **Ordnance Survey as part of the Electoral Register.** This mitigates against the use of false or invalid addresses; and
  - the **mail out of the ballot papers / proxy letters** gives a layer of secondary protection as a means of **person specific authentication;**
- moving on to the next stage, all returned postal votes require an accompanying **Declaration of Identity form** with Full Name, Full Date of Birth and a Signature included. This **Declaration of Identity form is, uniquely in Northern Ireland when compared to Great Britain, witnessed by a third party.** The completed Declaration of Identity form is then assessed by Electoral Office officials
  - the personal data (Full Name and Full Date of Birth) is checked against the Electoral Register - **this acts as an additional safeguard;**
  - separately signatures from the absent vote application form and the Declaration of Identity form are compared - the Electoral Office uses handwriting experts to confirm this - **this acts as an additional safeguard;**
  - ballot paper contains a unique number that links to the number on the Declaration of Identity form - **this acts as an additional safeguard;**
- in the 2023 Local Elections of the 14,902 postal votes (temporary and permanent) approved and sent out, 12,797 postal votes were returned to the Electoral Office. Looking back to the 2019 General Election the overall postal vote turnout for Great Britain was 84% (6.9 million returned out of 8.2 million sent out) and for Northern Ireland was 83% (14,100 returned out of 17,000 sent out). **Thus postal vote turnout in Northern Ireland is in line with Great Britain.** In short if an elector

applies for and obtains a postal vote, then they are likely to use it and there is no evidence of differentially higher postal vote turnout in Northern Ireland when compared with Great Britain;

- the postal/proxy vote process was reinforced further with **new UK-wide rules from the Government in the Elections Act (2022)**<sup>8</sup>. The Electoral Office will implement these new rules in upcoming elections;
- **each election is run to a strict timetable** – part of this is shown for the 2023 Local Election in Figure 1. More specifically the temporary postal/proxy vote application process is typically run in a short time window. **Linked to this is the challenge that a large number of applications come to the Electoral Office in the last 2/3 days creating challenges for administration.** This is then followed by a short time window for the issuing and verification of postal/proxy votes. This is important to remember as there is very limited time for the public to obtain their Digital Registration Number if they have either lost their registration letter or make an incorrect absent vote application.

17. Taken together these show the level of checks for postal and proxy votes in Northern Ireland. **As Chief Electoral Officer I am content that these checks are safe and robust. They lead, in my view, to an elevated level of protection.**

18. Notwithstanding this the Government introduced as part of the 2018 Regulations<sup>3</sup> on online voter registration<sup>9</sup> **Northern Ireland specific checks** on postal and proxy votes. **Voters in Northern Ireland who originally went online to register to vote are subsequently provided a Digital Registration Number (DRN) which they are required to provide when applying for a postal or proxy vote.** The Digital Registration Number was intended to be a digital replacement for the “**wet signature**” that is required on paper

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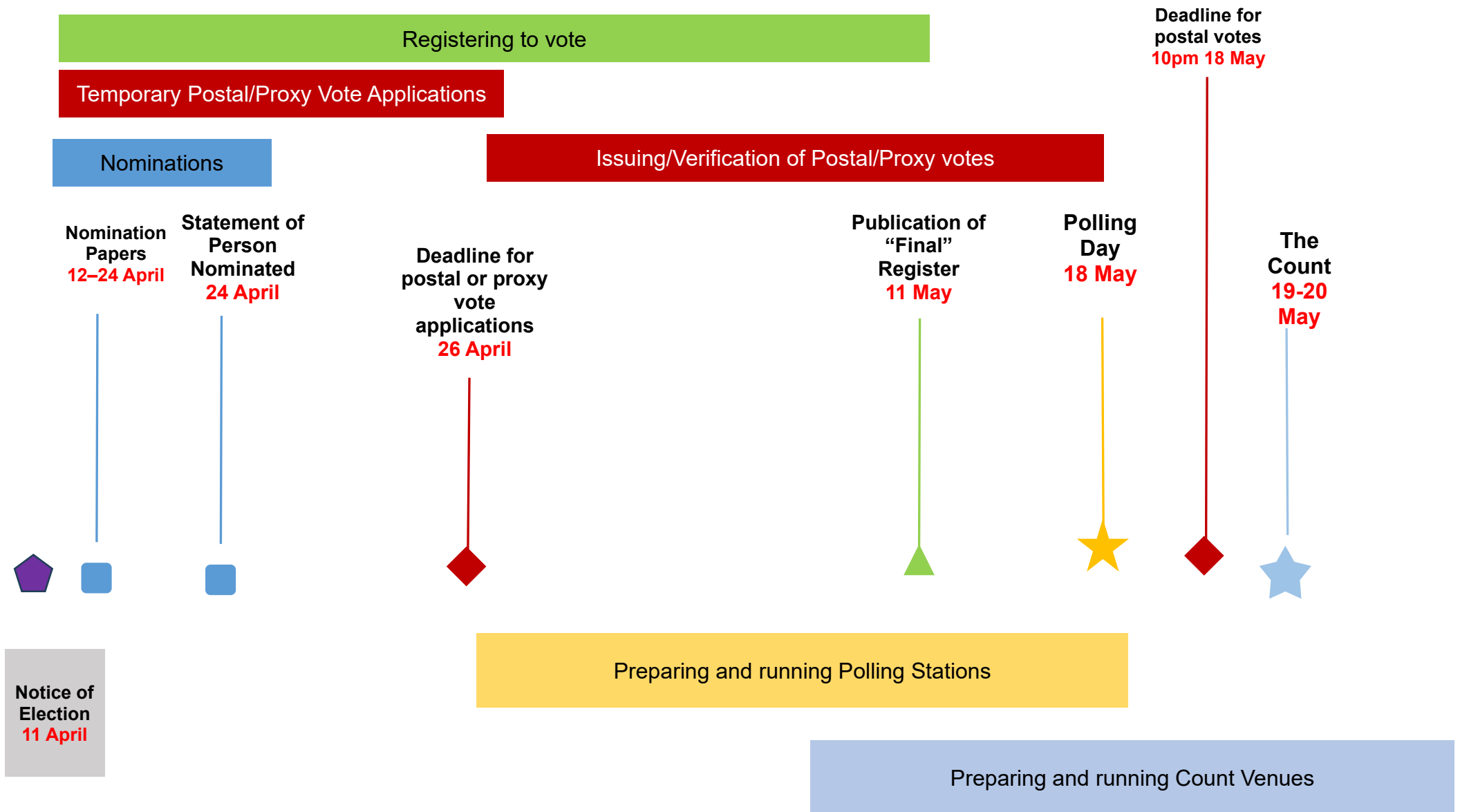
<sup>8</sup> See <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2022/37/contents/enacted> for further information.

<sup>9</sup> The Northern Ireland specific Digital Registration Number law was introduced as the online registration to vote form does not contain a “[wet signature](#)”. This difference between paper and online forms led to perceived concerns locally about the probity of subsequent postal/proxy votes as the law required a “wet signature” check for absent vote applications. To address this, the Government set out the Digital Registration Number law which provides an individual with a Digital Registration Number to use in future absent vote applications. **The Digital Registration Number requirement for such absent vote applications is unique to Northern Ireland and no such requirement is in place in Great Britain.**

**I note that all Northern Ireland postal/proxy vote applications** are paper based with a “wet signature.” The “wet signature” on the postal vote application form is compared with the Declaration of Identity form and there are separate identity checks in the Polling Station for proxy votes. Both the postal and proxy vote systems also include other non-DRN identity checks (verification with official data for full name, full address, full date of birth & full National Insurance Number etc...).

registration applications. **However this law has created challenges for the public and the Electoral Office in delivering Local Elections. These challenges are discussed in the next section.**

Figure 1: Local Council Elections 2023 – Elector Specific Timetable



#### 4. Discussion of the Digital Registration Number law introduced in Northern Ireland

19. As part of the introduction of online voter registration in Northern Ireland in 2018, the Government passed Northern Ireland specific regulations<sup>3</sup>. **The new rules included the issuing of a Digital Registration Number to any elector who went online to register to vote<sup>9</sup>.** Following the 2021 Canvass around 85% of registered electors here have now been issued with their Digital Registration Number via a confirmation mail/email (see Annex A).

20. In 2018, the Government legislated for the Digital Registration Number to be provided in place of “wet signatures” in absent vote applications following an original online voter registration<sup>9</sup>. **However, the Digital Registration Number law has created issues for the public and for the Electoral Office at election time. This includes:**

- a number of **political campaigners**, who help the public at election time, do not **understand the new Digital Registration Number law and specifically how it relates to postal/proxy votes. This has led to misinformation and confusion for the public;**
- the law is difficult to understand **as only electors who went online to register to vote must provide their Digital Registration Number when applying for a postal/proxy vote. This “partial” law is hard for the public to understand;**
- a **sizeable number of relevant electors in Northern Ireland**
  - **do not know they have a Digital Registration Number, and/or**
  - **do not know how to get their Digital Registration Number;**
- a **sizeable number of relevant electors in Northern Ireland also do not know that they need to supply their Digital Registration Number when applying for a postal or proxy vote;**
- the **time window for an election is short** and electors when applying for a postal/proxy vote can get confused on the Digital Registration Number requirement and make an incorrect application;
- taken together this leads to some postal or proxy vote applications, relating to electors who registered to vote online, having no Digital Registration Number

included on their application and being rejected. **There is no latitude for the Electoral Office – the issue is the law and not the administration of it;**

- at the 2023 Local Elections 21,294 applications for a postal or proxy vote were made. Of these 14,277 applications were successful and 7,017 were rejected. Of those rejected, the majority (5,118) were applications from people who were registered to vote online and did not supply a Digital Registration Number. The Electoral Office worked to process postal/proxy applications as quickly as possible and inform electors with letters of rejection. Of this group of 5,118 rejected applications, 1,283 electors successfully reapplied for a postal/proxy vote. The details are shown in the Table below:

**Table: Digital Registration Number (postal/ proxy vote rejections) Local Elections 2023**

<b>Local Election 2023 – Postal / Proxy Applications/Rejections</b>	<b>Number</b>
Total Number of Postal / Proxy vote applications	21,294
<i>Accepted</i>	14,277
<i>Rejected</i>	7,017
<i>Applications rejected (other reason)</i>	1,899
<i>Applications rejected (Digital Registration Number issues)</i>	5,118
<u><i>Digital Registration Number rejections(\$)</i></u>	5,118
<i>Number who successfully reapplied for Postal / Proxy vote(*)</i>	1,283

*\*A further number of electors who did not reapply will have separately voted in person – the exact number is not known but it is estimated around 50% of the remaining electors will have voted in person.*

*\$In total 4,828 applications were rejected with no Digital Registration Number supplied when it was required, a further 290 applications were rejected with an incorrect Digital Registration Number supplied when it was required. This makes up the 5,118 rejected applications shown.*

21. This is far from ideal and can make voting difficult for some of the most vulnerable in society. In my view, the only permanent solution is for the UK Government to reform the Digital Registration Number law.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Any reform of the law will need consideration. The Electoral Register includes Full Name, Address, Date of Birth and National Insurance Number. At Polling Places electors are identity checked using driving licences, passports etc. One long-term solution could include greater use of administrative reference numbers (e.g., national insurance, driving licence, passport etc..) as a means of identification for postal/proxy votes from the public (an element of this is already used in the USA). As part of any reform the Government could separately legislate for online absent vote applications in a manner consistent with [digital identification within UK](#). Online absent vote applications would bring Northern Ireland in line with Great Britain and also help the public at election time. Whatever solution legislated for must be simple, easy for the public to use & well communicated.

22. Given the issues in the 2023 Local Elections, my predecessor met with local political parties. **The local political parties indicated that the Digital Registration Number requirement for postal/proxy votes created difficulties.** In addition, the Electoral Commission on their report on the 2023 Local Elections noted that:

*“It is therefore vital that the UK Government urgently reviews the Digital Registration Number to ensure that these barriers are removed while also maintaining the integrity of the absent voting process.”<sup>11</sup>*  
Electoral Commission Report on May 2023 Local Elections – September 2023

23. I have written to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, who is responsible for Electoral Law, indicating that my predecessor held meetings with local parties and that I have published this report. **I note here that I believe law reform is the only permanent solution<sup>10</sup> and that any reform should also include the ability to apply for absent votes online. This would bring Northern Ireland into line with Great Britain, where online absent vote applications are possible. Clearly the delivery of any reforms brought forward would need careful planning and a clear delivery plan.**

## **5. Digital Registration Number Administrative Mitigations**

24. There was also consensus among local political parties, that wider change takes time and that in the short-term administrative mitigations of the Digital Registration Number were needed to limit the impact of the current law on upcoming elections. As Chief Electoral Officer I agree mitigations are needed, and I set out plans in the paragraphs that follow<sup>12</sup>.

25. My planned mitigations are designed to alleviate the impact of the current Digital Registration Number law. I set out a plan with three elements<sup>13</sup>:

- **Better Communication** of elections, electoral registration & the Digital Registration Number requirement to the public. Subject to their agreement, an element of this work will be undertaken by the Electoral Office in partnership with the Electoral Commission who are responsible for communication of elections in Northern Ireland;

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<sup>11</sup> From the Electoral Commission report on the 2023 Northern Ireland Local Elections – see <https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/who-we-are-and-what-we-do/elections-and-referendums/our-reports-and-data-past-elections-and-referendums/report-may-2023-local-elections-northern-ireland>.

<sup>12</sup> To be administered effectively any change in law needs delivered well in advance of any upcoming election. The mitigations were developed to work irrespective of the change in the law.

<sup>13</sup> The mitigations will take time to be implemented. The Electoral Office will work to deliver as much of this plan as quickly as possible. However, as the timing of future elections is unknown, no guarantee can be given on whether all the planned mitigations are deliverable in time for any upcoming election.

- **Better Technology** to help the public determine whether they are registered to vote and, if they went online to register to vote, to get their Digital Registration Number;
- **Better Absent Vote Processes** to help the public fill out their postal or proxy vote application forms. This would create improved ways for the Electoral Office to inform electors whether their postal or proxy application was approved.

### *Better Communication*

26. As part of the work to provide better communication to the public about elections, the Electoral Office plan to:

- develop a **generic paper flyer to be posted to all households with key information on electoral services**. This will give key information for the public – subject to their agreement this would be carried out in partnership with the Electoral Commission;
- send a **generic email / text message to electors** who the Electoral Office hold email addresses/mobile numbers for. This would include similar information to the paper flyer and work alongside the statutory poll-card;
- **present Digital Registration Number rules to local political parties** and send training materials about Digital Registration Number processes to political campaigners; and
- **document these mitigations on the Electoral Office website** and update the plan as work progresses.

27. In undertaking this work the Electoral Office will work with the Electoral Commission in Northern Ireland. As Chief Electoral Officer, I will also lobby the Electoral Commission to take forward paid public advertising on the Digital Registration Number in Northern Ireland as part of future election campaigns.

### *Better Technology*

28. Subject to a final cybersecurity assessment, the Electoral Office plan to implement an online system by Spring 2024 to allow members of the public to **look up whether they are on the Electoral Register**. This service will be delivered in a secure way and will also provide, for those that are registered online, their Digital Registration Number.

### *Better Postal/Proxy Vote Processes*

29. The Electoral Office plan to simplify the postal and proxy application forms to make them easier to fill out and reinforce the Digital Registration Number requirement. This work will also refine the webpage <https://www.eoni.org.uk/Vote/Voting-by-post-or-proxy> to make it simpler and easier to understand.

30. The Electoral Office also plan to develop improved ways to more quickly respond to postal or proxy applications that have been rejected – this will include first-class post and where possible emailing/texting the initial response to postal/proxy applications.

**Dr David Marshall**

**Chief Electoral Officer for Northern Ireland**

**January 2024**

## Annex A: Sample confirmation letter with Digital Registration Number

### THE ELECTORAL OFFICE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

St Anne's House, 15 Church Street,  
Belfast BT1 1ER

Telephone: 02890446680

Email: [info@eoni.org.uk](mailto:info@eoni.org.uk)

Website: [www.eoni.org.uk](http://www.eoni.org.uk)

 Follow us on Twitter @eoni\_official



Name  
Address line 1  
Address Line 2  
Address Line 3  
Postcode

### Certificate of Registration: Issued by the Chief Electoral Officer for Northern Ireland

Dear Sir / Madam

I, Dr David Marshall the Chief Electoral Officer for Northern Ireland certify that the person named has an entry on the electoral register, which will commence on **XXXXXX** as follows.

Name	<b>XXXXXX</b>
Qualifying address	<b>XXXXXX</b>
Constituency	<b>XXXXXX</b>
Electoral number	<b>XXXXXX</b>
Digital Registration Number	<b>XXXXXX</b> [On-line applicant's digital signature]

Yours faithfully,

Dr David Marshall  
Chief Electoral Officer

Digital Registration Number; THIS IS YOUR DIGITAL SIGNATURE.

Please keep this secure and do not share with others.

You will need this Digital Registration Number for Electoral administration, e.g. should you wish to apply for a postal or proxy vote.

Official Document – Please keep in a secure place

This Certificate is official proof of your address and may be required for example by your bank/building society. If any of the details above are incorrect, please contact the Electoral Office immediately on the above telephone number.

## **Application to vote by post or proxy for an indefinite period on the grounds of blindness or other disability**

Please read the notes carefully before filling in this form.  
Please write in black ink and use BLOCK LETTERS.

**Making a false statement on this form is a criminal offence.**

### **1 About you**

Surname	<input type="text"/>
First Name	<input type="text"/>
Middle Name(s)	<input type="text"/>

Address where you are currently registered in Northern Ireland:

<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>

Post Code

Date of birth (DD/MM/YYYY)

<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
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National Insurance No.

☐ Tick this box if you have never had a National Insurance Number

Telephone Number (in case of query)

Email address (in case of query)

### **2 Reason for this application**

I am applying for an indefinite postal/proxy vote because:

☐ I am blind and registered blind by a Health and Social Care Trust. Please insert the Trust name and enclose supporting evidence.

<input type="text"/>
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OR

I have the following disability (insert details below)

<input type="text"/>
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☐ I am in receipt of the enhanced rate of the mobility part of a Personal Independence Payment because of this disability

☐ I am in receipt of the enhanced rate of the daily living part of a Personal Independence Payment because of this disability

☐ I am in receipt of the higher rate of attendance allowance because of this disability

If you tick one of the boxes above you must enclose evidence such as a copy of an official letter. Otherwise you must get someone to complete Section 7 (see overleaf).

### **3 Digital registration number (Only required if you registered online)**

If you registered online you will have been sent a Certificate of Registration by the Electoral Office which contains a Digital Registration Number (DRN). Please give this number, your application will not be accepted without it. If you cannot find this number please contact us (see notes).

Digital registration number:

<input type="text"/>
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### **4 Signature**

You must sign this form in the box below unless you are unable to because of a disability or you are unable to read. No one else can sign it for you.

Signature

<input type="text"/>
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Date

<input type="text"/>
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### **Witness Declaration**

If you cannot sign the form because of a disability or you are unable to read, you must ask a witness to fill in the section below for you.

Please note: if you signed a paper registration form we will be unable to process this application without a signature.

The person whose details are given on this form has told me that the information is correct. That person is unable to sign the form because of a disability/because they are unable to read.

Signature of Witness

<input type="text"/>
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Address of Witness

<input type="text"/>
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**THIS FORM CONTINUES ON THE NEXT PAGE WHICH MUST BE COMPLETED**

# Application to vote by post or proxy for an indefinite period on the grounds of blindness of other disability

## 5 Application to vote by post

☐ Tick this box if you wish to vote by post and you want the ballot paper sent to the address at Section 1.

If you wish to receive the ballot paper at a different address complete the following section. You must provide a reason for this. The address must be in the UK.

Address	<input type="text"/>
	<input type="text"/>
	<input type="text"/>
Post Code	<input type="text"/>

Reason why postal vote is to be sent to a different address:

## 7 Declaration

**NOTE** you do not need to complete this section if you are blind and registered with a Health and Social Care Trust or you have ticked one of the boxes in section 2 and have sent evidence such as an official letter. If you have a disability but cannot provide evidence this section must be completed by a qualified person who can attest that the information you have given is correct. Please see note 7 for guidance about who can complete it. **If you do not provide evidence (if applicable) or get your application attested it will be refused.**

This must be completed by a **qualified person** where the applicant has stated in Section 2 that they are unable to vote in person at their polling station due to a disability but they are not registered blind or in receipt of any of the allowances listed at section 2.

### Details of Attester

Full name	<input type="text"/>
Address (including postcode)	<input type="text"/>

Qualification (e.g. doctor, nurse – see note 7 of the guidance notes)

Telephone number (in case of query)

Email address (in case of query)

## 6 Application to vote by proxy

I wish to appoint the following person to act as my proxy (see note 6) on who can be appointed as a proxy). I confirm that I have consulted this person and he/she is willing and able to be appointed to vote on my behalf.

Surname	<input type="text"/>
First Name(s)	<input type="text"/>
Date of birth (DD/MM/YYYY)	<input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>
Address	<input type="text"/>
	<input type="text"/>
	<input type="text"/>
Post Code	<input type="text"/>

### I certify that:

I am registered as an elector.

To the best of my knowledge and belief (you must give the applicant's name below):

has the disability specified in Section 2 and cannot reasonably be expected to go in person to their allotted polling station or vote unaided there because of that disability and to the best of my knowledge and belief the disability specified in the application is likely to continue either:

☐ indefinitely OR

☐ for a period of  months

Signature

Date