

*To: Conservative MPs, councillors
Police & Crime Commissioners
Constituency Associations, in England*

6th April 2023

Dear Colleague,

LOCAL ELECTIONS: IDENTIFICATION AT POLLING STATIONS

Last year, Parliament passed the Elections Act 2022, which delivers on Conservative manifesto pledges to tighten the law to prevent electoral fraud. This will include measures to tackle postal voting fraud, punish intimidation, prevent foreign interference and ensure greater transparency on digital campaigning. These are being commenced in stages, to help councils and political parties with the new rules. This May's local elections in England will see the introduction of the Act's measure to require photographic identification to vote at polling stations.

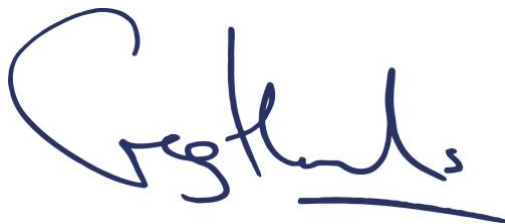
Northern Ireland has required photographic identification in all its elections since 2003. Introduced by the last Labour Government, it has proven to be effective at tackling fraud and improved voter confidence. The Conservative Government also undertook local election pilots in 2018 and in 2019, helping inform the rollout of this policy.

Research shows that 98 per cent of the population have a relevant form of photo identification. Accepted identification includes driving licences, passports, various concessionary travel passes, CitizenCard / PASS proof of age cards, Ministry of Defence cards and Blue Badge parking permit cards. Councils are offering a free Voter Authority Certificate to any elector who otherwise does not have identification (apply at: [link](#)).

Labour and Liberal Democrats are shamelessly opposing these sensible measures to tackle electoral fraud. Overleaf is some political Q&A which may be helpful if this issue comes up on the doorstep.

Political parties also need to do their bit to ensure that every elector has the opportunity to vote – in a safe and secure way. So we enclose some campaigning top tips from CCHQ.

Yours truly,



Rt Hon Greg Hands MP
Conservative Party Chairman

Identification at Polling Stations Q&A

Points on Labour

The last Labour Government introduced photo identification at polling stations across Northern Ireland in 2003, under direct rule. It has helped prevent election fraud and not harmed participation. Labour Government Ministers said then: ‘Personation at the polling station will be made much more difficult by the requirement for all voters to provide a specified form of photographic identification... The measures will tackle electoral abuse effectively without disadvantaging honest voters.... [ensuring that] no one is disfranchised because of them’¹

Many constituency Labour parties currently require two types of voter identification to vote in Labour Party candidate selection meetings. Members are told ‘bring photo ID’.² Photo identification, in the form of a passport or driving licence, is required to register to attend the Labour Party conference.³

Points on Liberal Democrats

Liberal Democrats supported the introduction of photographic identification in Northern Ireland elections. The Liberal Democrat frontbench told Parliament: ‘We accept the need for a Bill... The Liberal Democrats also welcome the Government’s intention to introduce an electoral identity card.’⁴

Northern Ireland experience

The Electoral Commission has observed: ‘Since the introduction of photo ID in Northern Ireland there have been no reported cases of personation. Voters’ confidence that elections are well-run in Northern Ireland is consistently higher than in Great Britain, and there are virtually no allegations of electoral fraud at polling stations’.⁵

Q&A

Q: What’s the evidence that we need ID at polling stations?

International election observers have repeatedly called for the introduction of identification in polling stations in Great Britain, saying its absence is a security risk.⁶ Most European countries require some form of identification to vote, as well as countries like Canada.

The Electoral Commission has called for the introduction of identification in Great Britain since 2014. The 2015 Tower Hamlets election court judgment found that personation was one of the interlinked types of corrupt and illegal practices that took place, where people’s votes were stolen.⁷

The Democracy Volunteers report into May 2022 local elections in Tower Hamlets noted: ‘We were also concerned about the use of polling cards being displayed on an elector’s mobile phone and some voters being apparently unaware of their name and address which might have indicated some degree of

¹ Northern Ireland Office Minister, Desmond Browne MP, Electoral Fraud (Northern Ireland) Bill, *Hansard*, 10 July 2001, Col. 739.

² Poplar and Limehouse selection meeting, October 2019, cited in *Guido Fawkes blog*, ‘More Labour voter ID’ hypocrisy, 25 October 2019, ([link](#)).

³ *Guido Fawkes*, ‘Labour demand photo ID to attend conference’, 14 October 2019, ([link](#)); and Labour Party conference website ([link](#), accessed 24 September 2021).

⁴ Lembit Opik, Electoral Fraud (Northern Ireland) Bill 2nd Reading: *Hansard*, 10 July 2001, Cols. 705, 707, ([link](#)).

⁵ Electoral Commission, *Delivering and costing a proof of identity scheme for polling station voters in Great Britain*, December 2015, p.7; and House of Commons Library, *Voter ID: securing the ballot*, 20 September 2017.

⁶ Both the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), including in their 2005, 2010 and 2015 reports.

⁷ [2015] EWHC 1215 (QB), paras 336-342, ([link](#)).

personation in the voting process.⁸ These are high-profile cases, but personation is a crime of deception and covert.

Q: Why aren't 16-25 Railcards accepted, or 18+ Oyster cards (but 60+ Oyster cards are)?

Those particular cards do not have a suitably secure application process. Individuals could sign up to them without proper authentication that they are the individual featured on the photo card, thereby opening the door to personation.

Concessionary travel passes for the elderly have a more secure verification process.

Photographic identification accepted includes the proof of age 'Pass'/CitizenCard. Cabinet Office research has found that 99 per cent of those aged 18-29 held an accepted form of photographic identification.

Young people will generally already have identification as they will be regularly age checked in public – such as to buy a drink.

Q: Could this hinder those from ethnic minorities from voting?

Research has found that 99 per cent of those from ethnic minorities have some form of photo identification – more than 98 per cent for the population as a whole.⁹

Ethnic minorities in areas like Tower Hamlets and Birmingham have amongst been the biggest victims of electoral fraud.

Q: How is it consistent to support ID for voting, but not to support a general ID scheme?

We do not support compulsory Identity Cards or a National Identity database for UK citizens.

We do have an electoral roll. It is not unreasonable that there is a proper check on that when a person seeks to vote. This is no different from an identity check when taking out a library book or collecting a package from a post office – neither of which require ID cards.

Photographic identification at polling stations has successfully worked in all Northern Ireland elections since 2003: without the need for compulsory ID cards.

Q: Why aren't you tackling postal vote fraud which is a far greater problem?

We are. The Elections Act 2022 contains further measures to stop the theft of people's votes, including postal voting fraud.

⁸ Democracy Volunteers, *Tower Hamlets Elections 2022: Final Report*, May 2022, p.3.

⁹ Cabinet Office / IFF Research, *Photographic ID Research: Headline Findings*, March 2021, published May 2021.