



## Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities

**Baroness Scott of Bybrook OBE**  
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State

*Department for Levelling Up, Housing and  
Communities*  
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Mr Gerry Cornes  
Chief Executive  
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Our reference: 25903821

*Dear Mr Cornes,*

*27* April 2023

Thank you for your letter of 15 March to Lee Rowley MP about voter identification. I am replying as the minister now responsible for this policy area, and I note the motion from East Dunbartonshire Council.

Whilst we can all rightly be proud of the strong and long-standing democracy we are part of, it is also important that we are alert to any weaknesses in our processes that may undermine that strength. There are reports of personation or other electoral fraud in almost every election, including most recently during the 2022 local elections. In our current electoral system, there is inexcusable potential for someone to cast another's vote at the polling station. Personation in polling stations is very difficult to identify and prove - by definition, it is a crime of deception. But it's by no means a victimless crime. In 2013, the Electoral Commission found that it is often the most vulnerable who find themselves targeted, so it is right that we stamp out any potential for it to take place in elections.

That is why photographic voter identification is so important - it virtually eliminates the risk of personation occurring in the first place. The Government believes that the measure for voters to show an accepted form of photographic identification before being issued a ballot paper in polling stations is a reasonable and proportionate one.

Regarding your comment on the inclusion of forms of identification for younger people in the list of accepted forms of identification, the Government published a policy statement on voter identification in January last year which included explanations about the types of identification included in the Elections Act 2022. This is available to download at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/voter-identification-at-polling-stations-and-the-new-voter-card/protecting-the-integrity-of-our-elections-voter-identification-at-polling-stations-and-the-new-voter-card>.

Cabinet Office research shows that 98% of electors already own a photographic document that will be accepted under the new policy. This figure was in fact higher - 99% - for younger electors. The Government has also committed to review the voter identification policy after



implementation and will consider any appropriate changes to the list of accepted identification documents as part of this process.

Any registered elector who does not have suitable photographic identification they intend to use and wants a Voter Authority Certificate can apply to their local authority Electoral Registration Officer to obtain one, free of charge.

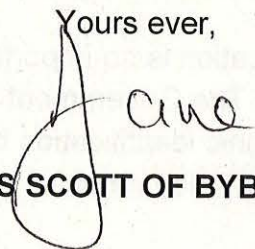
With regards to the costs of the policy, democracy does have a cost and the total cost of implementing the voter identification policy is estimated to be £112m over ten years. Costs are anticipated to reduce over time, as voters get familiar with the arrangements. The costs to local authorities of meeting the additional responsibilities demanded of them by the Elections Act will be met by central government as per the New Burdens doctrine.

The Government will continue the detailed planning ahead of implementation nationally, working closely with those who will be responsible for delivery including Local Authorities, the Electoral Commission, the Association of Electoral Administrators and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives.

The Electoral Commission has begun delivering a comprehensive and targeted communications campaign to raise awareness for the changes to the requirements at the polling station. This campaign will continue up until the May polls and the Government has provided additional funding to local authorities running elections this May specifically for local engagement and communications with electors.

I hope the above addresses your concerns about the Government's voter identification policy.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Awe', with a large, stylized loop on the left side.

**BARONESS SCOTT OF BYBROOK OBE**