



# Representation of the People Act 1985

## 1985 CHAPTER 50

### *Combination and timing of polls*

#### **15 Combination of polls at parliamentary,<sup>F1</sup>... and local elections.**

(1) Where the polls at—

<sup>F2</sup>(a) .....

(b) an ordinary local government election and a parliamentary general election;  
<sup>F3</sup>...

<sup>F4</sup>(c) .....

are to be taken on the same date, they shall be taken together.

(2) Where the polls at elections for related areas are to be taken on the same date but are not required by subsection (1) above or section 36 [<sup>F5</sup>or section 36B] of the principal Act to be taken together, they may nevertheless be so taken if the returning officer for each election thinks fit.

(3) In subsection (2) above the reference to elections <sup>F6</sup>... does not include elections under the local government Act which are not local government elections; and for the purposes of that subsection two areas are related if one is coterminous with or situated wholly or partly within the other.

[<sup>F7</sup>(3A) Where the polls at an election of the Northern Ireland Assembly are to be taken on the same date as the polls at one or more elections of the kind mentioned in subsection (1), the Chief Electoral Officer for Northern Ireland may direct that the polls at the election of the Assembly are to be taken together with the polls at the other election or elections.]

(4) Where the polls at any elections are combined under this section the cost of taking the combined polls (excluding any cost solely attributable to one election) and any cost attributable to their combination shall be apportioned equally among the elections.

(5) The Secretary of State may by regulations make such provision as he thinks fit in connection with the combining of polls at any elections under this section including

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provision modifying the Representation of the People Acts in relation to such elections.

<sup>F8</sup>(5A) . . . . .

[<sup>F9</sup>(5B) The power under subsection (5) above to make provision in connection with the combining of polls under subsection (3A) includes power to modify—

- (a) Part 2 or 3 of the Schedule to the Elections Act 2001 (in addition to the power conferred by paragraph 32 of that Schedule);
- (b) any provision made under section 34(4) or 84(1) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 or section 38(1)(a) of the Northern Ireland Constitution Act 1973 (see section 95(1) of the 1998 Act);
- (c) any provision made by or under Northern Ireland legislation relating to local elections.]

[<sup>F10</sup>(5C) Before making provision under subsection (5) in connection with the combination of polls where one of the elections is a local government election in Scotland, the Secretary of State must consult the Scottish Ministers.]

[<sup>F11</sup>(5D) Before making provision under subsection (5) in connection with the combination of polls where one of the elections is a local government election in Wales, the Secretary of State must consult the Welsh Ministers.]

[<sup>F12</sup>(6) In its application to Northern Ireland, subsection (1) above shall have effect as if the references to an ordinary local government election were to a local election.]

#### Textual Amendments

- F1** Words in s. 15 heading repealed (31.12.2020) by [The European Parliamentary Elections Etc. \(Repeal, Revocation, Amendment and Saving Provisions\) \(United Kingdom and Gibraltar\) \(EU Exit\) Regulations 2018 \(S.I. 2018/1310\)](#), reg. 1, **Sch. 1 Pt. 1** (as amended by [S.I. 2019/1389](#), regs. 1, 2(2))
- F2** S. 15(1)(a) repealed (31.12.2020) by [The European Parliamentary Elections Etc. \(Repeal, Revocation, Amendment and Saving Provisions\) \(United Kingdom and Gibraltar\) \(EU Exit\) Regulations 2018 \(S.I. 2018/1310\)](#), reg. 1, **Sch. 1 Pt. 1** (as amended by [S.I. 2019/1389](#), regs. 1, 2(2))
- F3** Word in s. 15(1) repealed (31.12.2020) by [The European Parliamentary Elections Etc. \(Repeal, Revocation, Amendment and Saving Provisions\) \(United Kingdom and Gibraltar\) \(EU Exit\) Regulations 2018 \(S.I. 2018/1310\)](#), reg. 1, **Sch. 1 Pt. 1** (as amended by [S.I. 2019/1389](#), regs. 1, 2(2))
- F4** S. 15(1)(c) repealed (31.12.2020) by [The European Parliamentary Elections Etc. \(Repeal, Revocation, Amendment and Saving Provisions\) \(United Kingdom and Gibraltar\) \(EU Exit\) Regulations 2018 \(S.I. 2018/1310\)](#), reg. 1, **Sch. 1 Pt. 1** (as amended by [S.I. 2019/1389](#), regs. 1, 2(2))
- F5** Words in s. 15(2) inserted (20.3.2021) by [Local Government and Elections \(Wales\) Act 2021 \(asc 1\)](#), s. 175(3)(f), **Sch. 2 para. 3**
- F6** Words in s. 15(3) repealed (31.12.2020) by [The European Parliamentary Elections Etc. \(Repeal, Revocation, Amendment and Saving Provisions\) \(United Kingdom and Gibraltar\) \(EU Exit\) Regulations 2018 \(S.I. 2018/1310\)](#), reg. 1, **Sch. 1 Pt. 1** (as amended by [S.I. 2019/1389](#), regs. 1, 2(2))
- F7** S. 15(3A) inserted (15.9.2011) by [Fixed-term Parliaments Act 2011 \(c. 14\)](#), s. 7(2), **Sch. para. 15(2)** (with s. 6)
- F8** S. 15(5A) repealed (31.12.2020) by [The European Parliamentary Elections Etc. \(Repeal, Revocation, Amendment and Saving Provisions\) \(United Kingdom and Gibraltar\) \(EU Exit\) Regulations 2018 \(S.I. 2018/1310\)](#), reg. 1, **Sch. 1 Pt. 1** (as amended by [S.I. 2019/1389](#), regs. 1, 2(2))
- F9** S. 15(5B) inserted (15.9.2011) by [Fixed-term Parliaments Act 2011 \(c. 14\)](#), s. 7(2), **Sch. para. 15(3)** (with s. 6)
- F10** S. 15(5C) inserted (18.5.2017) by [Scotland Act 2016 \(c. 11\)](#), **ss. 4(2), 72(4)(a)**; [S.I. 2017/608](#), reg. 2(1) (b)

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- F11** S. 15(5D) inserted (1.4.2018) by [Wales Act 2017 \(c. 4\), ss. 5\(2\), 71\(4\)](#) (with [Sch. 7 paras. 1, 6](#)); [S.I. 2017/1179, reg. 3\(b\)](#)
- F12** S. 15(6) inserted (10.4.2001) by [2001 c. 7, s. 3\(2\)](#)

**Modifications etc. (not altering text)**

- C1** S. 15 applied (with modifications) (2.4.2001) by [S.I. 2001/1298, reg. 16\(6\), Sch. 5 Pt. 1 Table](#) (as amended (E.) (13.3.2004) by [S.I. 2004/226, reg. 2\(7\), Sch.](#))  
S. 15 extended (N.I.) (10.4.2001) by [2001 c. 7, s. 3\(1\)](#)
- C2** S. 15 applied (with modifications) (28.7.2007) by [The Local Authorities \(Conduct of Referendums\) \(England\) Regulations 2007 \(S.I. 2007/2089\), regs. 1\(2\), 8, 11, 12, 13, Sch. 4 Table 2](#)
- C3** S. 15 applied (with modifications) (9.2.2012) by [The Local Authorities \(Conduct of Referendums\) \(England\) Regulations 2012 \(S.I. 2012/323\), reg. 1, Sch. 4 para. 1 Table 2](#) (as amended (31.12.2020) by [S.I. 2018/1310, reg. 1, Sch. 2 para. 10](#) (as amended by [S.I. 2019/1389, regs. 1, 2\(2\)](#)))
- C4** S. 15 applied (with modifications) (18.2.2012) by [The Local Authorities \(Conduct of Referendums\) \(Council Tax Increases\) \(England\) Regulations 2012 \(S.I. 2012/444\), reg. 1, Sch. 4 para. 1 Table 2](#) (with reg. 27) (as amended (31.12.2020) by [S.I. 2018/1310, reg. 1, Sch. 2 para. 11](#) (as amended by [S.I. 2019/1389, regs. 1, 2\(2\)](#)))
- C5** S. 15 applied (with modifications) (25.7.2012) by [The Police and Crime Commissioner Elections Order 2012 \(S.I. 2012/1917\), art. 1\(2\), Sch. 4 para. 1](#) (as amended: (31.1.2017) by [S.I. 2017/67, reg. 1, Sch. 4 para. 8\(3\)](#); (1.11.2022) by [S.I. 2022/885, reg. 4](#); and (7.2.2024) by [S.I. 2024/131, regs. 1\(3\), 22\(3\)](#))
- C6** S. 15 applied (with modifications) (3.8.2012) by [The Neighbourhood Planning \(Referendums\) Regulations 2012 \(S.I. 2012/2031\), regs. 1, 8, 12, 13, Sch. 4 Pt. 1 Table 2](#) (as amended (31.12.2020) by [S.I. 2018/1310, reg. 1, Sch. 2 para. 13](#) (as amended by [S.I. 2019/1389, regs. 1, 2\(2\)](#)))
- C7** S. 15(4) excluded (10.4.2001) by [S.I. 2001 c. 7, s. 5\(2\)](#)
- C8** S. 15(5) extended (10.4.2001) by [2001 c. 7, s. 4, Sch. para. 32](#)
- C9** S. 15(5) extended (Gibraltar) (18.9.2003) by [Local Government Act 2003 \(c. 26\), ss. 127\(1\), 128, Sch. 7 para. 7\(2\)](#)

**F13<sup>16</sup> Postponement of poll at parish or community council elections.**

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**Textual Amendments**

- F13** S. 16 repealed (2.4.2013) by [Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 \(c. 6\), ss. 15\(1\), 27\(1\)](#); [S.I. 2013/702, art. 3\(b\)](#)

**17 Combination of polls at local elections.**

—For subsection (3) of section 36 of the principal Act (local elections in England and Wales) there shall be substituted—

“(3) Where the polls at—

- (a) the ordinary election of district councillors for any district ward or an election to fill a casual vacancy occurring in the office of such a councillor, and
- (b) the ordinary election of parish or community councillors for any parish or community or an election to fill a casual vacancy occurring in the office of such a councillor,

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are to be taken on the same day and the elections are for related electoral areas, the polls at those elections shall be taken together.

- (3A) For the purposes of this section electoral areas are related if they are coterminous or if one is situated within the other.
- (3B) Where the polls at any elections are combined under this section the cost of taking the combined polls (excluding any cost solely attributable to one election) and any cost attributable to their combination shall be apportioned equally among the elections.
- (3C) The Secretary of State may by regulations make such provision as he thinks fit in connection with the combining of polls at any elections under this section including provision modifying the Representation of the People Acts in relation to such elections.”.

## 18 Ordinary day of local elections.

- (1) <sup>F14</sup> .....
- (2) In paragraph (b) of section 37 of that Act (power to fix alternative day as ordinary day of local elections in England and Wales by order made not later than 1st February in the year preceding the first year when the order takes effect) for the words “the first year” there shall be substituted the words “the year (or, in the case of an order affecting more than one year, the first year)”.

### Textual Amendments

**F14** S. 18(1) repealed by [Statute Law \(Repeals\) Act 1989 \(c. 43\)](#), s. 1(1), [Sch. 1 Pt. XI](#)

## 19 Timing of elections.

- (1) In section 40(1) of the principal Act (days to be disregarded for the purpose of the timing of local elections in England and Wales)—
- for the words “Sunday, day of the Christmas break, of the Easter break or of a bank holiday break” there shall be substituted the words “Saturday, Sunday, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, bank holiday”; and
  - the words for “In this subsection” onwards shall cease to have effect.
- (2) In section 39 of that Act (local elections void etc. in England and Wales) in subsection (1) (period within which elections to fill vacancies to be held) for the words “42 days” there shall be substituted the words “35 days”.
- (3) In section 43 of that Act (day of ordinary local elections in Scotland and other timing provisions) in subsection (2) immediately before the words “Sunday”, “Christmas Day” and “Good Friday” there shall be inserted respectively the words “Saturday”, “Christmas Eve” and “Maundy Thursday” and for the words “for the purposes of this Act” there shall be substituted the words “for the purposes of this Part of this Act in so far as it relates to the conduct of local government elections in Scotland”.
- (4) In section 119 of that Act (computation of time for purposes of Part II) for subsections (2) and (3) there shall be substituted—

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- “(2) The days referred to in subsection (1) above are Saturday, Sunday, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, a bank holiday or a day appointed for public thanksgiving or mourning.
- (3) In this section ”bank holiday”, in relation to any election, means a day which is a bank holiday in the part of the United Kingdom in which the constituency or, as the case may be, electoral area is situated.”.
- (5) In Schedule 1 to the principal Act (parliamentary elections rules), in rule 2 (computation of time)—
- (a) in paragraph (1) for sub-paragraph (b) there shall be substituted—
- “(b) Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday or a bank holiday”;
- and
- (b) paragraph (3) shall cease to have effect.
- (6) In the <sup>M1</sup>Local Government Act 1972—
- (a) in section 243 (computation of time) in subsection (3) for the words “Where under subsection (1) above the day of election or” there shall be substituted the words “Where under subsection (4) below” and the words “of election or”, in the second place where they occur, and “as the case may be” shall cease to have effect;
- (b) for the purposes of subsection (4) of that section, subsection (1) of that section shall have effect as if for the words from “Sunday” to “bank holiday break” there were substituted the words “Saturday, Sunday, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, <sup>F15</sup>... Good Friday or bank holiday”; and
- (c) in section 89(1) (period within which elections to fill casual vacancies in office of councillor for principal area to be held) for the words “forty-two days”, in both places where they occur, there shall be substituted the words “thirty-five days”.

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#### Textual Amendments

**F15** Words in s. 19(6)(b) repealed (1.1.2007) repealed by Electoral Administration Act 2006 (c. 22), ss. 10, 11, 18, 20, 47, 61, 74, 77, Sch. 1 para. 53, Sch. 2; S.I. 2006/3412, art. 3, Sch. 1 paras. 12(c), 13(c) (subject to art. 6 and with Sch. 2)

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#### Marginal Citations

**M1** 1972 c. 70.

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**Changes and effects yet to be applied to :**

- s. 15 heading words inserted by [2012 c. 11 s. 2\(6\)](#) (this amendment not applied to [legislation.gov.uk](#). 2012 c. 11, s. 2 omitted (18.5.2017) without ever being in force by virtue of Scotland Act 2016 (c. 11), ss. 10(6), 72(4)(a); S.I. 2017/608, reg. 2(1)(h))

**Changes and effects yet to be applied to the whole Act associated Parts and Chapters:**

Whole provisions yet to be inserted into this Act (including any effects on those provisions):

- s. 15(1)(d)(e) inserted by [2012 c. 11 s. 2\(2\)\(b\)](#)
- s. 15(3ZA) inserted by [2012 c. 11 s. 2\(4\)](#)