

FIXED-TERM PARLIAMENTS ACT 2011

EXPLANATORY NOTES

COMMENTARY ON SECTIONS

Section 1: Polling days for parliamentary general elections

25. *Section 1* states that the polling day for the next parliamentary general election is to be 7 May 2015. *Subsection (3)* sets out that the polling day for every subsequent general election is to be held on the first Thursday in May five years from the date of the last election. *Subsection (4)* provides that where an early general election takes place under section 2 of the Act, the next general election will generally take place on the first Thursday in May in the fifth year from the date of the last election. However, if the early election is held before the first Thursday in May in an election year, the next general election will be held on the first Thursday in May in the fourth year from the previous election. The effect being when an early general election is held, the election day of the first Thursday in May is restored at the next election, and the duration of the Parliament resulting from the early election will normally be no more than five years in length.
26. *Subsection (5)* provides a power for the Prime Minister to defer the date of a scheduled parliamentary general election under section 1 by a period of no more than two months. This is to accommodate short term crises or other conditions which might make it inappropriate to hold the election on the scheduled date, for example, a repeat of the foot and mouth crisis which led to the postponement of the local elections in 2001. The power to defer by up to two months would be exercisable by statutory instrument subject to the affirmative procedure. This means that the order could not be made until it had been approved by both Houses of Parliament. *Subsection (7)* provides that any such draft order must be accompanied by a statement from the Prime Minister setting out his reasons for proposing a change to the polling day.