

Chairman:
Sir Alistair Graham

*35 Great Smith Street
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PRESS NOTICE

PN 189

5 July 2006

***EMBARGOED: NOT FOR USE BEFORE 00.01 HRS
ON THURSDAY 6 JULY***

COMMITTEE'S PUBLIC HEARING IN CARDIFF FOR ITS ELEVENTH INQUIRY INTO THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION

Key witnesses including the Rt Hon Rhodri Morgan AM, First Minister for Wales, representatives from the four main political parties, electoral administrators, and the Electoral Commission are giving evidence today (Thursday) at the Cardiff public hearing for the Committee on Standards in Public Life's eleventh inquiry.

The Inquiry is looking at key themes critical to public trust in our democratic system through a review of the mandate, governance and accountability of the Electoral Commission.

Issues already raised in written evidence to the Committee (<http://www.public-standards.gov.uk/11thinquiry/evidence.asp>) include:

- *the integrity and application of the current political party funding arrangements, and implications of any changes;*
- *electoral propriety including voter registration, electoral administration and electoral fraud; and*
- *the contribution these issues make to voter engagement with the political process.*

In his opening statement today (Thursday), Committee Chairman, Sir Alistair Graham, comments:

"This inquiry is an important one. If we look at the foundations of our democracy, then healthy competitive political parties and confidence in the electoral process are two critical cornerstones. Any doubts about the integrity by which political parties are funded or in the trust we can place in free and fair elections have the potential to critically undermine the health of our democracy, and the extent to which the public is prepared to engage in the political process."

"At our hearing today we are interested to learn how the Commission has discharged its mandate in Wales and whether the governance and accountability of the Commission takes sufficient account of its mandate here. We are also looking forward to learning about the approach taken to the administration of elections, voter

registration and party political funding. We hope that, as in previous inquiries, there are lessons that can be learnt for other parts of the United Kingdom.”

Witnesses have been invited to help the Committee examine the current responsibilities of The Electoral Commission, set up five years ago following the Fifth Report of the Committee in 1998. The Commission is an independent body set up by Parliament to promote integrity, effectiveness and participation in the democratic process.

The hearing which is open to the public is being held **today (Thursday) 6 July** at **Jury’s Hotel, Mary Ann Street, Cardiff, CF10 2JH, from 9:30am to 4.15pm.**

The following witnesses are to give evidence:

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| 9.30 | Dr Roger Scully, Dept of International Politics, University of Wales Aberystwyth |
| 10.00 | Glyn Mathias, Electoral Commissioner and Kay Jenkins Head of Office, Electoral Commission |
| 11.00 | Rt Hon Rhodri Morgan AM, First Minister for Wales |
| 13.30 | Bob Screen, Chairman of AEA Wales |
| 14.00 | Matthew Lane, Welsh Conservative Party |
| 14.45 | Dafydd Trystan, Plaid Cymru |
| 15.15 | Stephen Smith Welsh Liberal Democrat Party |
| 15.45 | Susan Smith, Chair Local Government Boundary Commission for Wales |

OPERATIONAL NOTE: NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Media Enquiries

For all media enquiries and interview requests on any matters relating to the Committee and its chairman, Sir Alistair Graham, media should contact:

Mark Pearson, Press Officer on 07841-021468 (including out of hours)

Or, if unavailable:

Dr Richard Jarvis, Secretary to the Committee on 0207-276-2597 or 07818-075-284 (mobile).

Media wishing to attend/film any public hearings are requested to contact Mark Pearson in advance on the number above. There will be no advance accreditation of media, but journalists will need to produce formal ID, preferably a photographic pass, when they arrive. Journalists should sign in on arrival, as this will ensure that they receive any follow-up material. Stills photography will not be permitted during the course of the hearings. A photocall with the Chairman and committee members will be held at 9.30a.m on Thursday 6 July. Broadcasters may pick up a sound feed of the hearings by prior arrangement with the venues (please contact Jan.ashton@cabinet-office.x.gsi.gov.uk at the Committee secretariat, 020 7276 2594, for more information).

Transcripts

The Committee has appointed WordWave, 190 Fleet Street, London EC4A 2AG (tel: 0207 421 9269, fax: 0207 404 1424; email: drew.macaulay@Merrillcorp.com) to produce official transcripts of the proceedings. These will be available within five working days of each day's hearing, and on the Committee's website. Corrected transcripts will be published as a second volume to the report.

Witnesses

No approach should be made to witnesses in the hearing room.

Witnesses have been told that they are not giving evidence to a court or tribunal, so their statements will not be privileged from action for defamation. Witnesses should take care that any remarks made by them which are critical of another person or organisation or which place such persons or organisations in an unfavourable light are statements: which are based on facts which can be substantiated; in which they have an honest belief; and made solely for the purpose of assisting the Committee in its work.

NOTES FOR EDITORS

1. The Committee published an Issues and Questions paper, inviting written evidence, on 16 February 2006. The Issues and Questions Paper and written evidence received can be found on the Committee's website www.public-standards.gov.uk.
2. The Electoral Commission was established as an independent statutory authority on 30 November 2000. This followed the recommendations of the Committee on Standards in Public Life's Fifth Report, The Funding of Political Parties in the United Kingdom and the subsequent commencement of the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000.
3. The Committee's standing terms of reference are: "To examine current concerns about standards of conduct of all holders of public office, including arrangements relating to financial and commercial activities, and make recommendations as to any changes in present arrangements which might be required to ensure the highest standards of propriety in public life".
4. On 12 November 1997 additional terms of reference for the study on the funding of political parties were announced by the Prime Minister as: "To review issues in relation to the funding of political parties, and to make recommendations as to arrangements". The Committee's 11th Inquiry is located within these two combined terms of reference. The Committee's terms of reference specifically preclude it from investigating individual cases or specific allegations of misconduct. Nor has the Committee any powers to require others to do so. But the Committee may take account of information on material cases in formulating its recommendations.
5. The full membership of the Committee is: Sir Alistair Graham (Chairman), Lloyd Clarke QPM, Rita Donaghy CBE, Dame Professor Hazel Genn DBE, Dame Patricia Hodgson DBE, Baroness Maddock, The Rt Hon Baroness Shephard DL, Dr Elizabeth Vallance, Dr Brian Woods-Scawen DL.

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