

20 December 2012

REGIONAL RETURNING OFFICER DESIGNATIONS

Cabinet Office – Elections and Parliament Division

INVITATION FOR APPLICATIONS FOR THE POSTS OF REGIONAL RETURNING OFFICER IN ENGLAND, WALES AND SCOTLAND FOR THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN 2014

Cabinet Office invites applications for the posts of Regional Returning Officer in the electoral regions in England and for the electoral regions of Scotland and Wales. For Northern Ireland, electoral law stipulates that the Regional Returning Officer is to be the Chief Electoral Officer for Northern Ireland.

Under section 6(2)&(3) of the European Parliamentary Elections Act 2002 the Secretary of State has authority to designate by Order those designated to carry out the responsibilities of Regional Returning Officer (RRO) in England, Wales and Scotland.

The European Parliamentary Elections (Returning Officers) Order 2009 refers to the Parliamentary constituency for which the RROs were acting returning officers (in Scotland, returning officer), rather than to individuals by name.

Cabinet Office, in consultation with the Scotland Office and Wales Office, has decided that, as for the 2009 European Parliamentary elections, the RRO posts in the electoral regions in England, and for the electoral regions of Scotland and Wales, should be determined after an open competition. We anticipate that we will be in a position to make the designations by April 2013 so that those designated can be appointed by Order in time to be involved in the preparations being made at least a year in advance of the European Parliamentary elections in mid- 2014. (The date is yet to be set through negotiation with European Member States but has been in early June in other relevant years. The date will be known at least one year in advance of the polls.)

The posts concerned are those for the following electoral regions:

East Midlands Eastern London North East North West South East	South West West Midlands Yorkshire and the Humber Scotland Wales
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Remuneration for the RRO posts will be based upon that provided in respect of the European Parliamentary elections in 2009, with any appropriate changes agreed with HM Treasury.

Role Description

This description has been agreed in discussion with the Electoral Commission:

- Undertaking the statutory duties of a RRO as set out in regulations made under the European Parliamentary Elections Act 2002, **see Annex**
- Offering support and advice to local returning officers in co-operation with the Electoral Commission, and issue directions as appropriate,
- Through attendance at the Electoral Advisory Board, ensure that the Commission's guidance and monitoring framework for the polls is fit for purpose and supports RROs in delivering well run polls and contribute to the wider work of that group.
- Monitoring preparedness across the region and promoting good practice, the sense of proactive leadership and example-setting,
- Assess regional needs, and, where appropriate, develop and promote mentoring networks for the region,
- Encouraging training and development activities,
- Ensuring a project management approach to electoral management, including effective contract and supplier management,
- Advocating the regional view to the Cabinet Office and Electoral Commission,
- Developing regional or sub-regional approaches where appropriate (e.g. regional contracts with suppliers),
- Engaging with political parties, candidates and agents,
- Promoting public awareness and participation, and encouraging local or sub-regional public awareness initiatives in co-operation with the Electoral Commission,
- Media liaison, in particular through liaison with Cabinet Office and Commission media teams,
- Police and prosecution liaison,
- Information collection and collation for the Cabinet Office and Electoral Commission and ensuring complete and timely collection of electoral data,
- Assist in delivering election seminars or briefings with the Electoral Commission,
- Communicating Cabinet Office and Electoral Commission plans to the region,
- Fostering good communications in the region,
- Liaising with other delivery partners such as Royal Mail,

- Liaising with practitioner groups such as AEA, SAA, etc.,
- Trouble shooting.

Successful applicants will also be required to:

- attend the Cabinet Office's Electoral Policy and Co-ordination Group meetings in person on a regular basis in order to contribute to the development of legislation and planning and to feedback on developments and issues in relation to these polls and wider policy development; and
- attend the Electoral Advisory Board as an *ex officio* member.

Criteria

Applicants must meet the following essential criteria:

- Hold designation as an acting returning officer (England and Wales) or returning officer (Scotland) for a Parliamentary constituency or (subject to confirmation by current Ministers and the making of an Order for commencement early in the New Year of the provision in the Political Parties and Elections Act 2009) be the holder of the designation of Greater London Returning Officer (GLRO) to be eligible to be designated as a RRO,
- Have been acting returning officer/returning officer for one UK Parliamentary general election, or returning officer for at least one full local government election, in the region they seek designation for,
- Demonstrate active participation in and convening of regional networks,
- Demonstrate a good track record in managing complex supplier and partner relationships,
- Demonstrate experience in the delivery of training and developmental/mentoring activities,
- Demonstrate experience in media relations and handling.

The panel will also take into account the following factors in assessing applications:

- Size of the applicant's local authority,
- Composition and experience of the authority's electoral services staff,
- Capacity and infrastructure in the authority,
- Previous experience as a RRO, or other proven experience in a regional / co-ordination role (for example as a Police Area Returning Officer or in relevant roles in Scotland and Wales),
- Assessment against the Electoral Commission's performance standards for Returning Officers.

Details Required

Applicants should provide the following details in writing:

- Full name,
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- Local authority and position within it,
- Contact address, e-mail, and telephone/fax number,
- Relevant electoral experience,
- A statement setting out how they meet the essential criteria for the post, and how they believe they/their authority meet the list of factors set out above.

Please note that applicants may only apply for the RRO post for the region in which the constituency/constituencies they are responsible for as acting returning officer/returning officer is/are located.

Timetable and selection process

The closing date for applications is **25 January 2013**

Candidates may be required to attend an interview for the post as part of the selection process. Any interviews are scheduled to take place between in the week beginning 18 February 2013 in London. An initial pre-interview sift may be carried out if there is a large volume of applications. The successful candidates should be identified by early March 2013. Applications will be considered by a panel comprising:

- Paul Docker (Chair), Head of Electoral Administration, Cabinet Office,
- Peter Wardle, Chief Executive, Electoral Commission,
- Senior independent member with relevant experience (such as a retired RRO or other ex-RO)

Where and when to send Applications

Applications should be sent electronically and / or in writing to:

Eileen Vagg

Electoral Administration Team
Elections and Parliament Division
Constitution Group
Cabinet Office
4th Floor 1 Horse Guards Road
London SW1A 2HQ

Eileen.vagg@cabinet-office.gsi.gov.uk

Tel: 0207 271 6400

Any questions should be referred to: Roy Williams

Electoral Administration Team
Elections and Parliament Division
Constitution Group
Cabinet Office
4th Floor 1 Horse Guards Road
London SW1A 2HQ

Tel: 0207 271 2757

Roy.williams@cabinet-office.gsi.gov.uk

ANNEX: INVITATION FOR APPLICATIONS FOR THE POSTS OF REGIONAL RETURNING OFFICER IN ENGLAND, WALES AND SCOTLAND FOR THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN 2014

This annex sets out the key duties of the Regional Returning Officer and the relationship with Local Returning Officers. More detail about the statutory functions of Returning Officers can be found throughout the relevant regulations.

Rules for European Parliamentary elections and general duty of returning officers and local returning officers (*Regulation 9, The European Parliamentary Elections Regulations 2004 as amended*)

9.—(1) The proceedings at a European Parliamentary election shall be conducted in accordance with the European Parliamentary elections rules in Schedule 1 to these Regulations.

(2) It is the returning officer's and the local returning officer's general duty at a European Parliamentary election to do all such acts and things as may be necessary for effectually conducting the election in the manner provided by those rules.

(3) The returning officer may give to any local returning officer for a local counting area in the electoral region for which he acts directions relating to the discharge of his functions, including directions requiring the provision to him of any information which that person has or is entitled to have.

(4) It shall be the duty of any local returning officer to whom directions are given under paragraph (3) to discharge his functions in accordance with the directions.

(4A) A returning officer or a local returning officer for a European Parliamentary election may take such steps as he thinks appropriate to remedy any act or omission on his part, or on the part of a relevant person, which—

(a) arises in connection with any function the returning officer or local returning officer or relevant person has in relation to the election, and

(b) is not in accordance with the European Parliamentary elections rules or other requirements applicable to the election.

(4B) A returning officer or local returning officer may not under paragraph (4A) re-count the votes given at an election after the result has been declared.

(4C) These are the relevant persons—

(a) a registration officer;

(b) a presiding officer;

(c) a person providing goods or services to the returning officer or local returning officer;

(d) a deputy of any person mentioned in sub-paragraphs (a) to (c) or a person appointed to assist, or in the course of his employment assisting, such a person in connection with any function he has in relation to the European Parliamentary election.

(4D) A returning officer or local returning officer for a European Parliamentary election must take such steps as he thinks appropriate to encourage the participation by electors in the electoral process in the area or region for which he acts.

(4E) A returning officer or local returning officer must have regard to any guidance issued by the Electoral Commission for the purposes of paragraph (4D) of this Regulation.

(5) No European Parliamentary election shall be declared invalid by reason of any act or omission by the returning officer, local returning officer or any other person in breach of

his official duty in connection with the election or otherwise of the European Parliamentary elections rules if it appears to the tribunal having cognizance of the question that—

- (a) the election was so conducted as to be substantially in accordance with the law as to elections; and
- (b) the act or omission did not affect its result.