



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

2nd February 2024

Dear Constance,

RE: VOTER IDENTIFICATION

Thank you for your recent correspondence in respect of your concerns about identification requirements at polling stations. I have read your comments with interest.

A secure electoral system is vital to a healthy democracy, and the public must have confidence that our elections are secure and fit for the 21st Century. I believe asking voters to bring photographic identification to their polling station is an important way of achieving this.

Identification to vote has been backed by the Electoral Commission and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, which state that its absence is a security risk. Without a requirement for identification at the polling station, it is harder to take out a library book, or collect a parcel at a post office, than it is to vote in someone else's name.

In Northern Ireland, voters have been required to produce personal identification before voting in polling stations since 1985, with photographic identification introduced in 2003 by the last Labour Government. Ministers at the time noted that *"the Government have no intention of taking away people's democratic right to vote. If we believed that thousands of voters would not be able to vote because of this measure, we would not be introducing it at this time."* I believe it is absolutely right that the Government stamps out the potential for voter fraud and brings the rest of the UK in line with Northern Ireland.

I appreciate your concerns about identification at polling stations - however, I must stress that introducing identification to vote was a Conservative Party manifesto commitment in 2019. The Organisation for the Security and Co-operation in Europe's Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and the Electoral Commission both expressed concern about the previous system and recommended the use of identification at polling stations. Indeed, in 2014, the Electoral Commission recommended that voters should be required to show identification at the polling station to *"tighten up the security of the voting process"*.

In addition, a report published by Sir, now Lord, Eric Pickles in 2016, recommended the introduction of providing identification before voting. The report acknowledged that the number of allegations was low and cases of prosecution were rare. It also explained, however, that the significant vulnerability highlighted by expert organisations and the fact that 80 percent of the registered electorate vote at polling stations, gave rise to a risk that needed to be addressed.



I would also like to stress that the act of assuming the identity of another person with the intention to deceive, known as personation, is very difficult to prove and prosecute. There are, however, frequent anecdotal reports of personation, including during the 2021 local elections. Cases of voter fraud are often only uncovered when the real voter subsequently tries to vote, which is why voter identification is so important - it virtually eliminates the risk of personation occurring in the first place.

Showing identification to prove who they are is something people of all walks of life already do every day. A wide range of photographic identification documents will be accepted at the polling station, and the Voter Authority Certificate was created so that anyone without identification can apply for a free new one from their local authority. I have been assured that the Government will continue to raise awareness of the Voter Authority Certificate.

You can apply for a Voter Authority Certificate to use in future elections and referendums, using the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/apply-for-photo-id-voter-authority-certificate>.

Once again, thank you for having taken the time to contact me and if I can ever be of any further assistance to you then please do not hesitate to contact me again.

With best wishes,

**TOM PURSGLOVE MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE**