

STATES OF JERSEY



DRAFT ELECTIONS (APPOINTED DAY) (JERSEY) ACT 202- (P.17/2025) : COMMENTS

**Presented to the States on 26th March 2025
by the Comité des Connétables**

STATES GREFFE

COMMENTS

Summary

The Comité des Connétables fully supports the move to a Sunday polling day for the 2026 ordinary elections for Connétables and Deputies.

The Comité's views were sought in July 2024, as one of the options to seek to increase voter turnout, on the polling day being held on a Sunday rather than a Wednesday.

However, whilst the report of PPC indicates the expectation that Sunday voting will increase voter turnout for the elections in 2026, it does not explore the impact of other factors, such as voting opening hours, on turnout. The Comité is of the opinion that these should be considered particularly as other voting options such as pre-poll and postal voting will continue to be offered.

Voting Day Background:

A 1998 report¹ recommended a Saturday poll as the Working Party "*felt very strongly that the date set for the polls for Senators, Deputies or Connétables should avoid days which were normal working days for the majority of people.*" However, the States decided to keep Wednesday as the polling day.²

As the graph in PPC's report shows, in general, voting in national elections takes place on weekends (more than 60% of elections), with 94 countries choosing a Sunday for polling day.

The Comité agrees with PPC that in the absence of firm evidence to the contrary, and given voter apathy to date, a move to a Sunday election should be trialled to see if it brings more people to the polls.

Polling station opening hours in other countries:

PPC's report captures an international preference for voting to take place on weekends, with increased voter turnout on Sundays.

However, PPC's report is silent on the impact of other factors, such as voting opening hours or the availability of other voting options e.g. pre-poll and postal voting on turnout.

A cursory search shows that the hours vary across European countries for example:

- Belgium 8am to 4pm
- France 8am to 6pm
- Germany 8am to 6 pm
- Portugal 8am to 7pm
- Spain 9am to 8pm.

Had the proposed move to a Saturday election been agreed in 1998, the polling hours would have remained as 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. It was only because the proposal for Election

¹ Electoral Law Reform P.207/1998

² States debate on 3rd November 1998; amendment carried by 25 votes to 17

Day to be a Saturday had fallen, that the 2002 Law contained proposals for the hours of the poll to be extended on the Wednesday from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.³

The Comité welcomes the views of States members on the hours of the poll and whether these might be reduced for Sunday voting as all Jersey electors have the options of voting at pre-poll and by post (the postal vote restriction applying only to those out of the island on polling day was removed in 2022).

The following points should be considered in relation to a shorter Sunday polling period –

- A later opening for the poll, say 10 a.m., would facilitate the processing of postal and pre-poll votes prior to voters arriving. This is particularly important for postal votes, as there is provision in law for an elector to attend a polling station and produce the postal ballot paper they were issued and to vote on polling day. The elector will be unable to vote on polling day where postal votes have been received but not checked in; this has been an issue in previous elections.
- An earlier close of the poll, say 6 p.m., is more likely to enable the count to be completed on the evening of polling day, rather than this being delayed until next day. With the recent decision to re-introduce the office of Senators, votes will need to be counted in 3 elections.
- Employment legislation – whereas Wednesday is a normal working day, Sunday is a rest day for staff and compensatory rest periods will be required. Staff will also need to work on Saturday (also a rest day) to ensure the polling station is ready for polling day. Employees are entitled to statutory rest periods⁴. As many Parishes have a limited paid staff, the provision of compensatory rest periods could impact the weekday service in the week(s) before and after polling day.

Having considered these various issues, the electoral administrators propose polling hours of 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. should be considered.

Financial and Staffing implications:

Financial and staffing implications will likely vary between Parishes but include –

- staff time (working over the full weekend, the polling station set up being the day before polling day; with staff on duty from early morning on polling day etc.)
- availability of municipality/helpers to act as *Adjoints*
- hospitality/refreshments (cafés/restaurants previously used for Wednesday polling may have limited availability on a Sunday) and
- hire/use of premises (where polling stations are offered other than at the Parish Hall).

Some costs could be limited by holding over the count to the following working day though this may be considered undesirable. An earlier close of polling stations would assist in enabling the count to be undertaken on the evening of polling day.

³ P.132/2001

⁴ [2. Minimum Rest Periods and Annual Leave | JACS](#)

PPC's report identifies the increased administrative cost of a Sunday election. These costs will fall on both the Parishes and the States (as per Article 15 of the Elections (Jersey) Law 2002, the States meeting the costs incurred for a public election of a Deputy (and would also meet the costs for the election of Senators)).