

Living Streets election guidance – 2024

The General Election will take place on 4 July 2024. This document provides information on the guidance that Living Streets staff and Local Groups must follow when engaging in political activity as part of their work for the charity.

Overview

Charity law and government [guidance around charities and political activity](#) – is well-established and relatively clear. Charities can engage in ‘political activity’ as long as it’s in the service of their charitable objectives. For Living Streets, this means that all political campaigning must be related to our mission to achieve a better walking environment and inspire people to walk more.

The Electoral Commission recognises that “*campaigning, advocacy and political activity are all legitimate and valuable activities for charities to undertake*”.

Charities are free to write letters to councillors, MPs or Ministers, to seek to influence political parties to adopt policies that would support their beneficiaries (or to reverse or alter policies that harm them), to speak in public or to the press about these things, and to engage supporters and the public in campaigns to make change happen. This is the case during election periods just as at any other time.

The important thing is that those activities must be done in a politically neutral manner. As per the Lobbying Act, **we cannot promote or influence the success of any single party or candidate**. We can campaign on issues that are supported by one party and not by another, but we cannot lend support to one candidate over another on this basis.

In general, the distinction between campaigning that is allowed and not allowed should be quite straightforward using the guidance outlined above. Please see some specific examples outlined below.

Guidance on specific activity

- No Living Streets material, including on our website or social media pages, can urge people to vote for or against a certain party or candidate. Supporters and volunteers are able to campaign for parties in their own time but must ensure that they do not associate Living Streets or its name with any party-political activity. **Do not wear any Living Streets branded clothing when campaigning for a political party.**
- We cannot compare the policies of different parties on any material we produce such as leaflets, website or social media, unless doing so objectively as a statement of fact.
- We cannot ask only one party to adopt our policy recommendations or exclude any major party candidate from a hustings event (including events you are involved in but have not organised). We cannot highlight the endorsement of any of our specific policies by a candidate. Remember that MPs officially cease to be MPs – and will be one of several candidates in parliamentary constituencies. Any outreach or activity on behalf of Living Streets needs, therefore, to be directed at all candidates, rather than

just at one single party or candidate. This is the case at constituency and national level.

- On social media be careful what you are saying from the Living Streets account or from your own personal accounts if they are linked to Living Streets. We shouldn't be promoting anything about an elected official, candidate or party or policies known to be favoured by a particular party. Be safe not sorry and check in with us before you tweet.

Purdah

One point to note is the 'sensitivity period' between the announcement of an election and the election taking place, known as Purdah. For a General Election, this period will be determined by when the election is announced. For Local and Mayoral Elections, Purdah will typically influence the six weeks preceding the election. Regarding the elections held on 2nd May 2024, Purdah took place from w/c 11th March 2024.

During the Purdah period, elected officials are restricted from certain activities and using the resources available to their public office. In practice, this means that officials can only campaign as a prospective candidate, and not as the holder of a current post. For example, we held our National Walking Summit on 7th March 2024 because many of the officials we want to invite would not be able to speak to their current briefs under Purdah rules if the event were a week later. Details on the rules can be read [here](#).

Finally...

Living Streets is always politically neutral. This red tape will not stop us campaigning, but we are taking due diligence around our activities. Although at this stage we don't need to register for the Act, it is important that we all consider whether our events, campaigns or activity can be seen to be supporting one political party over another - although most activities will be fine.

If you need any help or have further questions, please contact Ruth (ruth.billingham@livingstreets.org.uk) or Zak (zak.viney@livingstreets.org.uk).

This is a live document that will be updated as Electoral Commission and Charity Commission guidance is issued. Please do not print this document, instead please refer to this Master Document.