"Review of the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000" consultation - Response of the Centre for Computing and Social Responsibility, De Montfort University

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This is a response to the 2002 UK Electoral Commission's initial consultation entitled "Review of the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000" (`http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/files/dms/review_7527-6214__E__N__S__W__.pdf`)

As a members of the research team commissioned by, inter alia, the Electoral Commission to research the Implementation of Electronic Voting, it appears advantageous to us that any amendment to PPERA takes account of the possible implementation of electronic voting (and, indeed, prior to implementation, trials of electronic voting).

Sections 28-29

Good interface design routinely calls for the use of colour where available. In very many implementations of electronic voting, including some or, quite possibly, all of those which might be adopted in the UK, colour is available.

One of the findings of the focus groups conducted as part of the Implementation of Electronic Voting project was that in the mock-up of electronic voting, "The use of party colours and logos was appreciated as it was felt these made it easier to see who you were voting for." Public Attitudes Towards the Implementation of Electronic Voting (`http://www.local-regions.odpm.gov.uk/egov/e-voting/pdf/attitudes.pdf`) (p28)

It thus seems appropriate that colour, as well as monochrome, emblems are registered for each party, so as to provide a definitive reference source for those implenting electronic voting, and to enable the Commission to ensure that colour emblems do not give rise to confusion between parties.

The use of colour in electronic voting should not be restricted to emblems. It is appropriate that for each candidate (etc) the party colour is used as the background to the text of their name and any other details displayed on the primary vote selection screen.

Care must be taken where party colours include a dark colour that text has sufficient contrast. This might be achieved by allowing parties to nominate a second colour for text, but if this is done, colour combinations should be chosen which do not cause problems for people with colour-blindness, to prevent the introduction of disability discrimination.

Further analysis of data from the focus groups indicates that where appropriate a change in background colour should indicate which options are selected (a feature of one version of the mock-up tested by our focus groups which was appreciated), or perhaps when a mouse (etc) is over that section of the screen. It may be appropriate for parties to be permitted to select another shade of their chosen colour to be used in such circumstances, although the choice of a second shade should not preclude another party from having that same shade, or something very similar, as its main colour, provided there is sufficient contrast between the main colours of the two parties concerned.

The steadily decreasing cost of colour printing would similarly suggest that colour should be used for printed ballot papers, although it might be considered that the cost was too great to justify this for local elections in the immediate future, and thus that monochrome party emblems should continue to be registered.

N Ben Fairweather, 23rd September 2002