

CPA BIMR

Election Observation Mission to Guernsey

JUNE 2025



FINAL REPORT

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Executive Summary

- **Legal Framework:** Overall, Guernsey's legal framework for elections is inclusive and accessible, providing a solid legal basis for democratic participation. Nonetheless, several areas remain unregulated or insufficiently codified, including rules on party organisation, campaign conduct, third-party involvement, in-kind contributions, and media coverage during campaigns.
- **Electoral System:** Guernsey uses a single island-wide constituency with plurality-at-large voting, with up to 38 votes per voter to elect 38 Deputies for four years. Introduced in 2020, the system ensures equal voter influence but creates challenges due to the high number of choices and island-wide campaigning.
- **Election Administration:** Stakeholders expressed a high level of trust in the work of the election administration, and the Registrar-General of Electors and the election team conducted themselves in a professional, inclusive and impartial manner.
- **The Right to Vote and Voter Registration:** The right to vote and universal suffrage are well provided for and the criteria for voter eligibility are inclusive, with voting permitted from 16 years of age. Voter registration is voluntary and undertaken for each election, which means that some eligible voters are not captured on the electoral roll.
- **The Right to Stand for Election and Candidate Registration:** Candidate registration in Guernsey was open and inclusive, with clear rules and a straightforward self-nomination process. 82 candidates offered voters a diverse range of choices. Political parties remain rare, with only one registered party, Forward Guernsey.
- **Election Campaign:** The election campaign was competitive, with candidates able to campaign freely and without undue impediment, and no major incidents were reported. The campaign was characterised by a large number of public meetings, social media posts, posters and a Manifesto Booklet delivered to all households. There are no clear guidelines or mechanisms to address any abusive behaviour during the campaign, including online abuse.
- **Campaign Finance:** There were significant changes to the regulations on campaign finance compared to the 2020 General Election, enhancing accountability and transparency. The regulated period for defined campaign expenditure was extended to six weeks prior to candidate nomination and candidate expenditure reports are now to be published. Campaign expenditure limits have been substantially reduced for both candidates and political parties.

- **Media:** Guernsey has a free and active local media, which provides some designated election coverage, though there is no formal regulation on how to cover the election process in a fair and balanced way. Political advertising is allowed, and some candidates took advantage of this. Social networks and social media in Guernsey are increasingly important for electoral engagement.
- **Diversity and Inclusion:** The 2025 Guernsey General Election reflected meaningful progress on diversity and inclusion, with strengthened anti-discrimination protections, increased representation of women and LGBTQ+ candidates, and improved accessibility for persons with disabilities. Civil society organisations played a vital role in driving this progress, though youth engagement remained limited and further alignment with international human rights standards is still needed.
- **Electoral Justice:** Guernsey's Royal Court, led by the Bailiff, handles electoral disputes and recounts when needed, while the Registrar-General of Electors is the first point of contact for complaints and may refer issues to the police. In this election, only a few complaints such as poster vandalism and abusive language were reported, with no requests for recounts or challenges to the results. The broad acceptance of the outcome, is a key sign of trust and a cornerstone of a well-managed democratic process.
- **Election Day:** Polling officials worked diligently and in an extremely helpful manner to support the process and assist voters as required. The trialling of an electronic electoral roll proved to be an excellent tool for supporting the administration of voting, notably given the absence of a requirement for formal ID when voting.
- **Counting and Results:** The counting of votes, on the day after election day, was conducted in a transparent manner, in the presence of candidates, media and observers, and was concluded in a far quicker time compared to 2020. Only 0.37% of the 19,686 ballots were spoiled, and no recounts were requested.

Introduction to Mission

At the invitation of the States Assembly Constitution Committee, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association British Islands and Mediterranean Region (CPA BIMR) conducted an Election Observation Mission to the Guernsey General Election on Wednesday 18 June 2025.

This is the second time CPA BIMR has observed a general election in Guernsey. The first mission took place in 2020 and was delivered virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore this is the first CPA BIMR in-person election mission taking place in Guernsey. The Mission was present in Guernsey from 9 June until 20 June 2025.

The eight-member Mission was composed of:

- Head of Mission – Hon. Alvina Reynolds MP, President of the Senate (Saint Lucia)
- Short-Term Observer – Rhoda Grant MSP (Scotland)
- Short-Term Observer – Hon. Dr. Ingrid Buffonge MLA (Montserrat)
- Election Analyst – Mark Stevens (UK)
- Election Analyst – Merce Castells (Spain)
- Mission Coordinator – Christopher Brown (UK)
- Mission Administrator – Magdalene El Beleidi (UK)
- Mission Administrator – Jack Manners (UK)

The CPA BIMR Election Observation Mission

The Mission conducted an independent assessment of the Guernsey General Election, evaluating it against international legal standards, commitments, and obligations, as well as Guernsey's domestic legislation. The assessment covered the legal framework, election administration, political campaigning, media environment, and the mechanisms for complaints and appeals.

In addition, the Mission examined broader electoral issues such as the participation of women, LGBTQ+ persons, and persons with disabilities. During its work, the Mission met with a wide range of stakeholders, including election officials, independent and party-affiliated candidates, the Chief Minister, the Bailiff, the Lieutenant Governor, civil society representatives, and members of the public. Observers attended campaign events and hustings, and welcomed submissions from individuals via a public email address.

The Mission observed in-person advanced polling on Sunday 15 June and Tuesday 17 June 2025, during which three super polling stations were open to voters. On Election Day, the Mission visited all eight polling stations across the island. It also observed the counting of votes on Thursday 19 June.

The Mission was independent in its composition, findings and conclusions, adhering to the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation and Code of Conduct for International Election Observers signed at the United Nations in 2005.

Political Background

Guernsey is a British Crown Dependency. It is not part of the United Kingdom but remains under the sovereignty of the British Crown. The UK is responsible for Guernsey's defence and international representation, while the island exercises autonomy over its domestic affairs, including the organisation of elections. The States of Deliberation is Guernsey's unicameral legislature and holds full legislative authority within the jurisdiction. It is empowered to draft, amend and enact primary legislation and subordinate instruments governing domestic affairs. In the absence of a separate executive branch, the States also exercises collective executive authority through its system of policy-making committees, which are responsible for the formulation and implementation of public policy. The judiciary operates independently of both the legislature and executive, with courts exercising judicial functions in accordance with the Bailiwick's legal framework and constitutional traditions. In the October 2020 general election - the first under island-wide voting - three registered political parties competed; none of these parties survived through to the 2025 election, illustrating the fleeting nature of party structures in Guernsey's fluid political landscape.

Legal Framework

International treaties ratified by the UK do not automatically apply to Guernsey; they must be explicitly extended through an Order-in-Council. Guernsey has already extended several international human rights instruments relevant to elections, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD). These treaties form the basis for essential electoral rights, such as the right to vote and stand for public office. However, Guernsey has not yet extended the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) or the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). This omission is significant, given the ongoing underrepresentation of women in the States of Deliberation and the need for legal guarantees that enable inclusive participation by persons with disabilities. It is recommended that Guernsey extend both CEDAW and CRPD to reinforce its commitment to equality, non-discrimination, and inclusive democratic participation.

Recommendation: Extend the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) to Guernsey to reinforce its commitment to equality, non-discrimination, and inclusive democratic participation.

Elections are governed by the Reform (Guernsey) Law, 1948, which has been amended on multiple occasions, most recently in 2025. It regulates key elements of the electoral process, including the electoral system, suffrage rights, candidate and party registration, campaign finance, voting procedures, election observation, and recount mechanisms. This legislative framework is supplemented by ordinances and non-statutory guidelines issued by the States Assembly & Constitution Committee (SACC), which plays a central role in electoral policy.

Several legislative reforms were adopted ahead of the 2025 elections. These included the Electoral Roll Ordinance 2024, which clarified registration deadlines and improved public access to the register; the Elections Ordinance 2024, which confirmed the polling date; and the Postal Voting (Amendment) Ordinance 2025, which strengthened security and extended deadlines. The Advance and Super Polling Station Ordinance 2025 enabled early voting and encouraged turnout. Amendments also narrowed disqualification criteria for candidates.

Campaign finance rules were reinforced through the Electoral Expenditure Ordinance 2025, which mandated the publication of detailed expenditure returns and confirmed lower spending limits for both candidates and political parties. These reduced limits had been agreed by the States in September 2024 and were therefore known well in advance of the election. The regulated campaign period was also extended to begin six weeks before nominations opened, closing loopholes that previously allowed unregulated early spending.

Nonetheless, reforms were adopted in late 2024, and some regulations in 2025, relatively close to the elections. The Venice Commission's Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters recommends that fundamental elements of electoral law should not be amended less than one year before an election, to ensure stability and allow participants to prepare adequately. The late timing of these changes, according to stakeholders, placed pressure on prospective candidates, who had to adjust to new rules and deadlines. For example, the political party Forward Guernsey, which registered in April 2025, had to quickly adapt its plans to ensure compliance with the revised legal framework.

Recommendation: Adopt any future amendments to electoral legislation at least one year before the start of the electoral process, in line with international good practice. This will help ensure legal certainty and a level playing field for all participants.

Guernsey's legal framework for elections overall is inclusive and accessible, providing a solid legal basis for democratic participation. Nonetheless, several areas remain unregulated or insufficiently codified, including rules on party organisation, campaign conduct, third-party involvement, in-kind contributions, and media coverage during campaigns. Moreover, there is currently no statutory framework governing the resolution of electoral complaints and appeals. While recent reforms have improved transparency and reporting obligations, enforcement remains limited due to the absence of a permanent oversight body.

Recommendation: Consider developing a comprehensive legal framework to address current regulatory gaps, including rules on party organisation, campaign conduct, third-party involvement, in-kind contributions, media coverage during campaigns, and the resolution of electoral complaints and appeals. Establish a permanent supervisory authority to ensure consistent enforcement and accountability.

Electoral System

The States of Deliberation is composed of 38 People's Deputies, elected by universal suffrage, and two non-voting Alderney Representatives, who are appointed by the States of Alderney to represent Alderney's interests in matters affecting both jurisdictions. The Bailiff of Guernsey serves as the Presiding Officer of the assembly but does not hold voting rights. The Law Officers of the Crown - the HM Procureur and the HM Comptroller - also attend sittings in an advisory capacity, without voting rights. They provide legal counsel to the States and help ensure legislative compliance with Guernsey's legal and constitutional framework.

The States of Deliberation is Guernsey's unicameral parliament from which members of the executive branch are drawn. Guernsey operates under a consensus system; the majority of Members sit on States' Committees and thereby participate in government. This model reflects Guernsey's tradition of inclusive, non-partisan governance.

The entire island of Guernsey forms a single electoral district, where all 38 Deputies are elected individually through a system known as plurality-at-large voting. Under this system, each voter may cast up to 38 votes, and the 38 candidates with the highest vote totals are elected for a four-year term. Deputies assume office on 1 July following an election.

This island-wide constituency model was introduced after a 2018 referendum and implemented for the first time in the 2020 General Election. It allows all voters to have an equal say in electing their representatives, irrespective of their place of residence. However, it has also presented notable challenges. Voters are required to navigate long and complex ballots, given the high number of candidates. Stakeholders also noted that campaigning has become more demanding and expensive, as candidates must reach and engage with a broader island-wide electorate, reducing the traditional face-to-face outreach.

Election Administration

There is no permanent election administration in Guernsey. Rather, there is an election team composed of civil service staff which is established for a period of some six months prior to the election. The election team is led by the Registrar-General of Electors, who is also appointed from among the civil service members. This team has responsibility for the electoral roll, providing information for candidates and voters, electoral operations, recruitment and training of volunteer staff, and the conduct of polling and counting. Outside agencies were contracted for the printing of ballots and provision and management of ballot counting scanners.

A Polling Station Officer is appointed by the Royal Court for each of the eight polling stations. A Central Returning Officer (CRO) is also appointed by the Royal Court to manage the counting and results processes. Each Polling Station Officer can appoint a Deputy and the CRO can appoint scrutineers.¹ Other staff for polling stations are volunteers. The election team informed the Mission that training for all staff was mandatory, to ensure a consistent understanding of the procedures for the polls.

¹ Article 37 of the Guernsey Reform Law (1948, as amended).

Stakeholders expressed a high level of trust in and appreciation of the work of the overall election administration. In terms of the electoral preparations, the Registrar-General of Electors and the election team conducted themselves in a professional, inclusive and impartial manner.

Many candidates informed the Mission that the Registrar-General of Electors was very open and responsive. It was also observed that the election administration provided substantial information and support for the process, enhancing participation, inclusivity and transparency. This included a website with information for both candidates and voters.²

The electoral administration also produced a Manifesto Booklet (see *election campaign*)³ including the profiles and programmes of all candidates wishing to submit material, and organised three 'meet the candidates' events between 7 and 11 June. A series of courses for prospective candidates was organised prior to nomination to increase understanding of the role and duties of an elected States Deputy, which participants claimed was extremely useful. In addition to English, some electoral information, notably for voter registration, was also produced in five other languages.⁴



The 2025 Manifesto Booklet, sent to all registered voters.

² www.election2025.gg

³ 80 of the 82 candidates submitted their information for the Booklet.

⁴ The five languages were: Filipino, Latvian, Polish, Portuguese and Thai. Though this did not include information on the official website.

The Right to Vote and Voter Registration

A person is eligible to vote if they are at least 16 years old on polling day and have been ordinarily resident in Guernsey for either the two years immediately before the election or for a total of five years in the past. There is no citizenship requirement. The right to vote is further strengthened by providing for postal and advance voting options and also by providing the right to vote for prisoners. Overall, the right to vote and universal suffrage are well provided for and the criteria for voter eligibility are inclusive.

Voter registration is voluntary and takes place separately for each election. People can be registered from the age of 15 on the electoral roll, though voting rights are only for those aged 16 years and above. The Committee for Home Affairs develops policies on the electoral roll and the Registrar-General of Electors maintains electoral registration for the period.

The previous electoral roll ceased to be valid on 30 November 2024 and the process for the new roll opened on 1 December 2024. Registration forms were sent to each household and reportedly there was extensive advertising on the need for people to register, including on TV, radio and online. The registration process closed on 30 April, 49 days prior to polling. The final electoral roll included 27,316 persons. This is a decrease of some 4,000 compared to 2020 and the lowest number since 2000. While the high number of registrants in 2020 may have reflected increased interest due to the then newly introduced island-wide electoral system, such a decrease, notably among younger age groups, is a concern. The registration process for the 2025 polls captured around 60% of the eligible electorate, though there were notable discrepancies among different age categories of voters.⁵

The need for voter registration for each election is well understood in Guernsey. The registration process, including being able to submit the request for inclusion on the electoral roll by post or online, is inclusive. Although the roll is formally closed in advance of each election, it is reopened thereafter, and electors are able to register or update their details at any time before the next general election. Periodic checks are also carried out to remove the names of those who have died. However, having a registration process for each election with a cut-off date well in advance of the polls, rather than a rolling list of eligible electors with regular updates, is an administrative burden and risks missing some of the eligible electorate from the electoral roll.

Recommendation: Review the merits of establishing a permanent electoral roll using relevant official data sources, to increase the number of eligible voters included on the electoral roll. This roll should be updated on a continuous basis to reflect newly eligible individuals, deaths, and changes in residency status.⁶

⁵ For information on Guernsey population see <https://gov.gg/population>.

⁶ This aligns with the *Venice Commission's Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters*, which states in Article 1.2 that "electoral registers must be permanent" and that "there must be regular updates."

Stakeholders acknowledged the effort to publicise the registration process, but claimed it used more traditional media and not enough platforms, such as TikTok, popular with younger persons. Of those registered, the majority are 50 or over and the fewest number are under 30. For instance, registered persons aged between 15-29 represented just 13% of the total, while those in the 50-65 years age group represented close to 30% of the total, and 65-80 years olds close to 26%. While these figures highlight the relatively small share of younger registrants, it should be noted that it is also reflective of Guernsey's ageing population.

An electronic copy of the new register is made available free of charge to contestants and a paper copy can be purchased. Candidates could also receive a 'walking map' indicating the location of registered households. Some concerns were expressed to the Mission that the sharing of detailed information from the electoral roll together with the map may not provide for adequate data protection for voters, notably as some are as young as 16.⁷

The Right to Stand for Election and Candidate Registration

The Reform (Guernsey) Law, 1948, allows any registered voter aged 18 or over on the date of nomination to stand as a People's Deputy, provided they have been ordinarily resident in Guernsey for either the two years immediately before nomination or for a total of five years at any time in their life. There is no citizenship requirement, making the eligibility criteria notably inclusive and consistent with Guernsey's tradition of open and participatory democracy.

Under the Reform Law, individuals are disqualified from standing if, in the five years preceding the election, they have served a prison sentence of six months or more (whether suspended or not), unless that sentence was quashed or reduced on appeal. They are also disqualified if they are serving a prison sentence of one year or more, or if they have escaped from custody and remain at large.

The registration process was open and straightforward. All candidates, including those running as independents and those competing under a political party, were required to self-nominate and submit their nomination forms in person to the Presiding Officer between 12 and 14 May 2025. Each nomination had to be endorsed by two registered voters. There was also a requirement to include declarations confirming the candidate's eligibility and disclosing any unspent criminal convictions that would also constitute an offence under Guernsey law. There was no registration fee or deposit. Conviction declarations were made available for public inspection from 15 May to 18 June 2025 at the Registrar-General of Electors' office and the Greffe (Royal Court House).

A total of 82 candidates registered for the 2025 election, offering voters a wide choice, with an average of 2.16 candidates per seat. The field included 27 women (33%), 9 non-Guernsey nationals, and 30 incumbents seeking re-election. The average age of candidates was 57.3, reflecting a relatively older but diverse group. Guernsey's strong tradition of non-partisan politics continued, with 76 candidates running as independents. The remaining six represented Forward

⁷ See Section 4 of the 2024 Council of Europe [Guidelines](#) on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data for the purposes of voter registration and authentication.

Guernsey, the island's only registered political party, which was formally established in April 2025. Although legal since 2020, party registration remains uncommon, and political affiliation continues to play a limited role in Guernsey elections. Political parties in Guernsey must register with the States' Greffier, submit a written constitution, designate officeholders, and pay a small administrative fee.

The registration process was open and accessible, with an approach that aligns with international democratic standards promoting inclusivity and the opportunity to stand for public office free from unnecessary barriers.

Election Campaign

The formal election campaign lasted for 34 days. It began following the close of nomination of candidates on 14 May and ended prior to election day on 18 June. The campaign was competitive, with the 82 registered candidates able to campaign freely and without undue impediment, and no major incidents were reported. A number of candidates commented that the introduction of the island-wide system impacted their ability to independently reach voters across the island in one-to-one engagements.

The campaign was characterised by a large number of public meetings, known as hustings. Some hustings were organised by the authorities but most were organised by interest groups or groups of candidates, often with like-minded candidates grouping together for an event.⁸ A number of organisations, such as the Guernsey Chamber of Commerce and the LGBTQ+ organisation Liberate, had pledges that candidates could sign up to as a way of showing their support, which raised their profile among interested voters.

Candidates also used banners, posters, leaflets and some door-to-door campaigning. A 276-page Manifesto Booklet was published and paid for by the States of Guernsey and delivered to all households registered by 2 June 2025. The Manifesto Booklet was also available online together with profiles of each candidate, who had submitted the required information. The Mission heard varying comments relating to the Manifesto Booklet, which has a distinct purpose in the context of the Guernsey electoral system, since each voter is able to make up to 38 choices. The 2023 Scrutiny Management Committee Review of Island-wide Voting found that 81% of people cited the Manifesto Booklet as their main source of information when it came to deciding who to vote for, and it was observed on election day that many voters used it as a reference in the polling station.

⁸ The official election website includes a [Calendar of Events](#), listing many of the public meetings organised by various stakeholders.



A panel of candidates responds to questions from the public during a hustings event on Monday 9 June

In addition to the promotion of candidate profiles on the official election website, many candidates made extensive use of online campaigning and social media. This included having their own websites, designated Facebook and Instagram accounts, and a limited number of YouTube and TikTok videos. A number of candidates used advertisements on Instagram and Facebook but some reported problems posting political advertising on Facebook, which is one of the main platforms used on the island. Several candidates reported difficulties in creating a campaign profile and complying with Meta's requirement to include a political disclaimer on Facebook and Instagram in Guernsey. They also noted challenges in contacting Meta to resolve these issues.

Some concerns were raised about abusive or misogynistic comments made online by one candidate, yet there are no clear guidelines or mechanisms to address such behaviour, unless it is raised with the police as a criminal complaint.⁹

Candidates are not currently required to sign a code of conduct. Introducing this requirement could strengthen the integrity of the campaign period, promote respectful public discourse, and reinforce candidate accountability.

Recommendation: Introduce a Code of Conduct for candidates. This requirement could strengthen the integrity of the campaign period, promote respectful public discourse, and reinforce candidate accountability.

⁹ The police informed the mission that they did not receive any election-related complaints during the process.

Campaign Finance

There were significant changes to the regulations on campaign finance compared to 2020.¹⁰ There were two positive regulatory changes introduced for these elections which aimed to increase accountability and transparency in campaign finance. The regulated period for campaign spending was changed to start six weeks before the date when candidate nominations can be submitted, which would hopefully capture campaign-related expenditure in the lead-up to the polls. There is also now a duty on the States of Guernsey to publish expenditure returns within 45 days from the date of an election, to enhance transparency of campaign expenditure.¹¹

With regard to campaign expenditure limits, the States Assembly and Constitutional Committee had proposed a significant increase in expenditure limits, to £7,500 for a candidate and £15,000 for a political party.¹² However, the States decided to reduce the campaign spending limits, lowering the limit for individual candidates from £6,000 to £3,000 and the limit for political parties from £9,000 to £3,000. The stated aim of this was to create a more level playing field, notably for those candidates with limited funding. It is also reflective of the fact that the average expenditure by a successful candidate in 2020, when island-wide elections were introduced, was around £2,200. The decision to reduce party expenditure limits to such an extent also arguably reflects what is an evident animosity of many regarding the inclusion of political parties in the political system in Guernsey. The £500 grant to each candidate, which was previously available, was also discontinued, which impacted less-well off candidates.¹³

While there was not a consensus on the matter, a number of stakeholders, including some candidates, claimed that the £3,000 limit was too low. They stated that it precluded them being able to print and distribute their own individual manifestos or materials to each household across the island. Candidates also noted it limited their ability to purchase media advertising, which was important given the island-wide system, and also served to increase their reliance on the government for their campaign.

Parties and candidates may receive donations of money or forms of other support such as services or goods, but these have to be declared. However, donations are not permitted from individuals not eligible to be on the electoral roll or from legal persons based outside of Guernsey. Some independent candidates raised a concern that the only political party contesting the June polls gained an advantage from its links with and support from an associated think tank. It was also highlighted that there was a lack of transparency in some instances regarding who

¹⁰ See [The Electoral Expenditure Ordinance 2025](#).

¹¹ See Article 45 of the [Reform Law](#). In addition, political parties must provide annual accounts.

¹² The expenditure limit for a party is reached by candidates from that party assigning up to a maximum of 50% of their own expenditure allowance to the party, up to the maximum of £3,000. For example, for these elections each of the six candidates of Forward Guernsey assigned £500 of their respective expenditure allowance to the party, thereby providing it with a spending limit of £3,000 but decreasing their individual limits to £2,500 each.

¹³ The authorities informed the Mission that this was partly decided to offset the costs of publishing the manifesto booklet. They also noted that significant support was already being provided to candidates through the official election website and the manifesto booklet, reducing the perceived need for a separate grant. These arguments are explored in [Billet d'État VII, 2024](#).

was organising some of the hustings. Article 45A of the Reform Law states that no money or money's worth should be expended by a person other than a candidate with a view to promoting the election of a candidate. Transparency regarding third party support for a candidate or party is important.¹⁴

Media

Guernsey has a free and active local media, which provided some designated election coverage. Media in Guernsey includes TV coverage from the BBC and ITV (Channel TV), Island FM radio, Bailiwick Express online news, and The Guernsey Press, which is the sole print newspaper and also has an online platform.

Media representatives informed the Mission that they used their own judgement on how best to cover the 82 candidates in a fair and impartial manner. There is an inherent challenge in covering an election with such a significant number of independents. There were a number of media initiatives in election coverage, including a BBC Guernsey series of hustings with candidates, a Guernsey Press podcast series of interviews with candidates and a special election supplement providing profiles of candidates.¹⁵ While the BBC, for instance, has national guidelines for its coverage of an election, for other media in Guernsey there is no formal regulation or code of conduct on how to cover the process in a fair and balanced way.

Recommendation: Consider introducing a Code of Conduct for election campaign media coverage to clarify the roles and responsibilities for fair and balanced reporting, ensuring consistent awareness and adherence across all stakeholders.

Political advertising is allowed, and some candidates took advantage of this with adverts in print and online media and on radio. For instance, Island FM radio provided all candidates with a published rate for a package of coverage available for approximately £500, which 23 candidates purchased. The media also covered the counting of votes and results.

Online social networks and social media are increasingly important for discussion and coverage of the election in Guernsey, as elsewhere. As well as the established media, there were reportedly a number of bloggers and social media accounts offering comments. Facebook is a particularly important platform in the Guernsey context, and an account called 'Guernsey People Have Your Say!' was cited as being prominent, with 25,000 members.

¹⁴ See paragraphs 255 and 256 of the [Venice Commission Guidelines on Political Party Regulation](#), which state that while third parties should be free to fundraise and express views on political issues, "some form of regulation ... be extended to third parties that are involved in the campaign, to ensure transparency and accountability".

¹⁵ Five of the 82 candidates did not respond to the set questions and so by their name it stated that they had not responded.

Diversity and Inclusion

The 2025 General Election in Guernsey took place in an evolved legal and social landscape, marked by strengthened anti-discrimination protections and growing civic engagement. The Prevention of Discrimination Ordinance, in place since October 2023, prohibits discrimination on the grounds of disability, race, carer status, sexual orientation, religion or belief, and gender reassignment. Although Guernsey has not yet extended key international treaties such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), these gaps were acknowledged during the campaign, with candidates publicly pledging to support the adoption of CRPD in particular.

Women, although still underrepresented in public office, made up a record-high 33% of the candidate pool. Eleven women were elected to the States of Deliberation, representing 28.9% of the 38 seats. This was a significant improvement compared to previous elections, though still just below the 30% threshold identified in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted at the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995. This benchmark was originally set as the minimum needed for meaningful participation. Over time, it has evolved into a broader goal, with parity now recognised as an international commitment in various global and regional frameworks, including those of the United Nations, the Council of Europe, and the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

Many candidates campaigned on platforms that explicitly supported gender equality and women's rights. These developments reflect the growing prominence of gender issues in Guernsey politics and the sustained efforts of civil society actors, especially that of Women in Public Life, a local association dedicated to encouraging and supporting women in politics and public service helping to raise awareness about the importance of gender-balanced representation.

Inclusivity and diversity were prominently featured throughout the campaign. Among the 82 candidates, several openly identified as LGBTQ+, including gay and transgender individuals. Seventeen candidates publicly endorsed Liberate's election platform, which called for concrete reforms to advance LGBTQ+ rights in Guernsey. Liberate, a Guernsey-registered charity founded in 2014, promotes fairness and equality and supports the LGBTQ+ community, their friends, and families across the Bailiwick of Guernsey. The platform advocated for improved access to inclusive healthcare, legal recognition of gender identity, comprehensive education on sexual and gender diversity, and greater protection against discrimination in housing and public services.

Persons with disabilities were also well represented, including both new candidates and sitting Deputies seeking re-election. More than 40 candidates supported the Guernsey Disability Alliance's manifesto, which called for greater accessibility, inclusive policymaking, and the extension of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Accessibility of the voting process itself was also improved. A pre-election audit ensured that polling stations met access standards, assisted voting options were made available, and an

easy-to-read voting guide was published. These measures facilitated participation among persons with mobility challenges, and learning disabilities.

Youth participation remained limited in the 2025 election. Although 16- and 17-year-olds are eligible to vote in Guernsey, young people were largely absent from the electoral process, both as voters and as candidates. Their visibility throughout the campaign was low, turnout among young voters remained modest, and only one young candidate stood for election. This highlights a persistent gap in youth political engagement and representation.

Guernsey's vibrant civil society has played a key role in improving diversity and inclusion in the electoral process. Many candidates are active members of charities and local advocacy groups, underlining the strong links between community work and political engagement. Overall, the 2025 election demonstrates meaningful commitment towards diversity, accessibility, and inclusion, though further alignment with international human rights standards remains a priority.

Recommendation: Introduce targeted measures to foster youth participation in politics and the electoral process. This could include tailored messaging through media and social media platforms commonly used by young people, civic education programmes in secondary schools, public awareness campaigns on democratic rights and responsibilities, and dedicated support for young candidates.

Electoral Justice

Guernsey maintains an independent and distinct judicial system rooted in Norman customary law, complemented by statutes enacted by the island's legislature, the States of Deliberation. The judicial sector functions autonomously from the executive and legislative branches and is essential in upholding the rule of law across civil, criminal, administrative, and electoral matters.

The cornerstone of the judiciary is the Royal Court, which has both civil and criminal jurisdiction. It is presided over by the Bailiff of Guernsey, the island's senior judge, who also serves separately as the presiding officer of the States of Deliberation in a non-political capacity. The Bailiff is supported by the Deputy Bailiff and a panel of lay judges, who are elected by the States of Election. While lay judges determine sentencing and assess damages in civil cases, matters of law are decided by professional judges.

Supporting this are the Magistrate's Court, which handles lower-level cases, and the Court of Alderney and Sark Seneschal's Court, which serve other islands within the Bailiwick. Appeals from the Royal Court are referred to the Guernsey Court of Appeal, and ultimately, cases of significant importance may be appealed to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in London, which serves as the final appellate body.

In terms of electoral justice, Guernsey does not operate a separate electoral tribunal. Instead, the Royal Court is the competent authority for handling electoral disputes. However, there is no clear process in the law for handling these complaints, so they are dealt with using general legal rules and judgment.

One key area of electoral dispute where the Royal Court plays a formal role is in election recounts. Under Guernsey law, unsuccessful candidates may request a recount if the margin between them and the lowest-ranking successful candidate falls within 1% of the total number of votes cast or 50 votes. Such cases are overseen by the Bailiff, who has the discretion to determine whether a potential recount is conducted electronically using vote scanning systems or manually by ballot paper rechecking.

While these mechanisms offer some way to challenge electoral issues, Guernsey's system for handling election complaints and appeals is still limited. There is currently no formalised process for submitting complaints related to campaign conduct, misinformation, electoral finance violations, or voter intimidation. People making complaints must instead turn to general legal options or share their concerns with the appropriate election officials or States committees.

In the absence of formal mechanisms to address electoral complaints, the Registrar-General of Electors acts as the point of contact in practice for grievances and may refer complaints to the police for further investigation. During the 2025 election, the Registrar received a number of complaints, including reports of campaign posters being taken down or damaged, misogynistic and abusive language used by one candidate against others, and allegations of campaign overspending. According to information available to the Mission, none of these cases resulted in prosecution or formal action.

Recommendation: Establish clearer and more structured mechanisms for resolving electoral disputes, to improve transparency, ensure consistency, and strengthen public confidence in the electoral process.

Election Day

Postal voting was available upon request and the deadline for such a request was 29 May. Postal ballots had to be received by 20:00 on 18 June in order to be eligible for counting. Voters requesting a postal ballot were marked on the electoral roll which meant they could not cast a regular ballot on election day. However, it was possible for a voter to hand deliver a postal ballot even on election day and a special ballot box for postal votes was provided. A total of 10,391 persons requested a postal vote, which was markedly down compared to 2020, though the previous election took place during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Advance voting was held on 15 and 17 June at the three largest polling stations. Around 12% of registered voters cast their votes during the advance period. Procedures for advance voting were the same as for voting on 18 June. Given the relatively small scale of the electorate in Guernsey, some stakeholders questioned the need for a second day of advance voting, notably given the existence of the postal voting option.

Observers followed the opening, voting and closing on both advance days and on election day, covering all polling stations. On election day, polling took place from 08:00 - 20:00 at eight polling stations across the island. Observers reported from four of the eight polling stations at opening.

They noted that all stations opened on time and followed proper opening procedures. In each case, polling officials demonstrated a good or very good understanding of these procedures.

For the observation of voting, observers made a total of 49 observation reports in total. Polling stations were well laid out, and voters were generally able to cast their vote in secret. However, secrecy of the vote was not always strictly enforced in all instances, due sometimes to the small size of the polling station and in other instances as family members were interacting during voting. No formal ID is required for voting, with a voter only required to declare their name and address, which could open up the process to abuse.

Persons requiring assistance were supported in an appropriate manner by election officials. Accessibility to polling stations was reasonable, though in some instances accessibility for wheelchair users was not ideal. St Andrew Douzaine polling station was notably not conducive for independent access for wheelchair users. Information about this was made clear however, with voters being advised to use an alternative polling station if they had mobility issues. Both a magnifier and torch were available in polling stations to help visually impaired voters see the ballot paper more clearly, if requested.



Voters queue early in the morning to cast their ballots on election day, Wednesday 18 June

The use of an electronic electoral roll was trialled in the three largest polling stations, as a tool to keep a better track, in real time, of people having voted across the island. The expectation is that, if successful, this will be rolled out for future elections. Given that voters are able to vote at any polling station and that each contains the full voter register, the electronic electoral roll will be an important tool to further ensure the integrity of the voting process and facilitate the processing of voters. The electronic roll appeared to be working well. It will be a useful tool in future elections to track in real time who has voted at polling stations across the island, helping to prevent double voting. Currently, double voting can only be detected after polling. The system also gives polling officials better access to information.

Recommendation: Building on the successful pilot, continue the introduction of the electronic electoral roll, ensuring it is available in all polling stations for future elections.

In 13 instances, observers reported that persons were not found on the electoral roll. This was due to a variety of reasons, including confusion among some as to whether or not they had requested a postal vote. In such cases, people were instructed to go home to find it in case they had. Other reasons included a lack of awareness that they were supposed to have registered for the election after having done so previously.

Overall, observers reported very positively on the management and conduct of the voting process across the two days of advance voting on 15 and 17 June and on election day on 18 June, particularly noting the commitment of polling officials who were dedicated, helpful and attentive and undertook their roles in a responsible manner. Voters had the right and opportunity to vote and were free to express their will.

At the close of voting materials were collected and held in a secured location, ready for the count on 19 June.

Counting and Results

Counting of votes commenced at 08:00 on 19 June at a central counting centre at Beau Sejour Leisure Centre. The counting process was transparent, with candidates and media present, and with good access for observers. Despite being a large and an administratively challenging exercise it was well managed. Lessons were learned from the 2020 election, when the count took longer than expected due to difficulties scanning a significant number of postal ballots. At that time, creases and tears in the papers prevented some from being read by the Optical Mark Recognition (OMR) scanners.

Postal ballots were first sorted, and the inner envelopes containing the ballots were separated to protect the secrecy of the vote. For ballots from polling stations, each station first had to confirm its paperwork with election officials, including the number of voters. The ballots from the station's ballot boxes were then verified and counted to ensure the total matched the number of people who had voted there.

A total of four OMR scanners were used, compared to two in 2020, in an effort to speed up the process. The same UK-based company as in 2020 was contracted to provide and manage the scanners. In case a ballot was damaged, and therefore would not be scanned by the OMR machines, the votes on it were transcribed onto a new ballot. Thereafter ballots were bundled and readied for scanning for the count of votes per candidate. Ballots rejected by scanners, or otherwise in doubt, were adjudicated on by election officials. There were 116 rejected ballots, with just 73 (0.37%) spoiled ballots and 43 blanks. In the event, the count was completed far quicker than in 2020.

The final result for the election was announced by the Central Returning Officer at 16:45 on Thursday 19 June. No recounts were requested, despite the 39th candidate falling within the margin for those eligible to make such a request. A total of 19,686 votes were cast, representing a turnout of 72%.

The leading candidate in the poll was a woman, and she received 10,721 votes, which is some 54% of those who cast their ballot, and the second placed candidate was also female. Four of the top ten candidates were female, and a total of 11 women (29%) were elected to the new States of Deliberation. The sole political party contesting the election with six candidates, Forward Guernsey, won three seats.

The newly-elected 38 Deputies of the States of Deliberation of the Bailiwick of Guernsey were sworn in on 1 July 2025.



The count centre on election day as results are about to be announced.

Recommendations

Election Day

1. Building on the successful pilot, continue the introduction of the electronic electoral roll, ensuring it is available in all polling stations for future elections.

Legal Framework

2. Extend the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) to Guernsey to reinforce its commitment to equality, non-discrimination, and inclusive democratic participation.

3. Adopt any future amendments to electoral legislation at least one year before the start of the electoral process, in line with international good practice. This will help ensure legal certainty and a level playing field for all participants.

4. Consider developing a comprehensive legal framework to address current regulatory gaps, including rules on party organisation, campaign conduct, third-party involvement, in-kind contributions, media coverage during campaigns, and the resolution of electoral complaints and appeals. Establish a permanent supervisory authority to ensure consistent enforcement and accountability.

The Right to Stand for Election and Candidate Registration

5. Introduce a Code of Conduct for candidates. This requirement could strengthen the integrity of the campaign period, promote respectful public discourse, and reinforce candidate accountability.

Media

6. Consider introducing a Code of Conduct for election campaign media coverage to clarify the roles and responsibilities for fair and balanced reporting, ensuring consistent awareness and adherence across all stakeholders.

Diversity and Inclusion

7. Introduce targeted measures to foster youth participation in politics and the electoral process. This could include tailored messaging through media and social media platforms commonly used by young people, civic education programmes in secondary schools, public awareness campaigns on democratic rights and responsibilities, and dedicated support for young candidates.

The Right to Vote and Voter Registration

8. Review the merits of establishing a permanent electoral roll using relevant official data sources, to increase the number of eligible voters included on the electoral roll. This roll should be updated on a continuous basis to reflect newly eligible individuals, deaths, and changes in residency status.

Electoral Justice

9. Establish clearer and more structured mechanisms for resolving electoral disputes, to improve transparency, ensure consistency, and strengthen public confidence in the electoral process.

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CPA BIMR ELECTION OBSERVATION SERVICES:

The first objective of the BIMR Strategy is to strengthen parliaments and the skills of their members. As part of this work, CPA BIMR facilitates election observations when invited to do so.

For more information about these services, please contact the CPA BIMR Secretariat at:
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