

Investment and Elections: the Charity Commission reviews its guidance

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The amended guidance note on 'Charities and Elections' clarifies the role charities may take leading up to and during a Referendum. In summary, the same general principles apply to referendums as to elections. The guidance is there to assist charities to maintain their independence while ensuring that they know the ways in which they may get their voice heard on behalf of their beneficiaries during the election or referendum campaign.

The guidance advises on the circumstances in which it is appropriate for a charity to give advice to their beneficiaries on how to vote. It sets out what trustees should consider, including how such activity fits with their charitable purposes, and the need to assess any campaigning they do in light of the party political dimension.

Meanwhile, the Commission has launched a public consultation about the updated guidance on charities' investments. The consultation is open until 28 February and can be accessed [here](#).

The guidance was last updated in 2003 so the changes are designed to bring the guidance in line with charities' current investment priorities. As well as seeking to help charities to survive and adapt to the tough economic and funding changes of recent years, Dame Suzi Leather, Chair of the Commission, commented,

"The Commission's guidance has always allowed charities to use a mix of financial and social investment to achieve their aims, and we hope our consultation clarifies this even further by explaining what charities can actively do within the law."

The consultation covers the key forms of investment that charities engage in, which include financial investment, ethical investment, mission connected investment and programme related investment. The guidance will also set out the trustees' duties when deciding the best investment policy for their charity.