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**Automatic Voter Registration:**

My view is that no legitimate voter should be excluded from our democracy and that unnecessary barriers should not be put in place that make it harder for legitimate voters to exercise their democratic rights. At the very least, therefore, I want to see a review of the impact of the recent introduction of mandatory Photo Voter ID for UK-wide and English local elections. With regard to other potential changes, such as AVR, I am resolved to keep an open mind and study the available evidence.

I note that the Electoral Commission has stated that AVR is possible from a technical perspective. It has said that it could implement it without the need for radical changes to the current structure of the electoral registration system in the UK, which is undertaken principally by local authorities. The Commission has also argued that AVR could help to improve registration levels among some under-represented registered groups, including the youngest part of the franchise.

However, the present Government has made clear that it has no plans to introduce Automatic Voter Registration for UK general elections. It argues that the current system of Individual Electoral Registration, first introduced in 2014, is a better system because it is, in its words, "trust based".

The Government has asserted, although without producing any evidence, that AVR "would risk increasing errors and inaccuracies in the registers" kept by local authorities. I recognise that this stance will disappoint you. I hope that UK Ministers will reflect on the points that you make and produce evidence in support of their contentions.

I know that the Welsh Government is planning to trial AVR for devolved elections in Wales. I will follow the progress of this trial with interest.

In the meantime, I want to see UK Ministers work with the Electoral Commission to encourage people to register to vote and exercise their democratic rights.

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