

## Time running out for EU ex-pat voters

CITIZENS of other EU countries living in Britain have only a few days left to ensure that they are entitled to vote in the May 23 European Parliament elections.

The government has been forced to allow Britain to hold elections for the 751-seat parliament because of its failure to push through a withdrawal deal.

All EU citizens living in the UK are entitled to vote in the European Parliament elections on May 23, and have to register to vote by May 7 ([www.gov.uk/register-to-vote](http://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote)).

Those who are citizens of another EU country must complete another step, which is to download and fill in the European Parliament voter registration form, available on the same web page and send it to their local electoral registration office by May 7.

Emmanuelle Brook, a French woman married to a British man, now has dual British/French citizenship. The family lives in Newquay in Cornwall. She said she was denied a vote in the 2014 European Parliament elections even though she had filled in the correct forms, apparently because of an administrative error. Because she went to vote in the evening, there was no time for the mistake to be put



right. After some initial confusion, she has now received a polling card, but she said: "This year I'm going to vote early to be certain."

All of the Westcountry councils we contacted confirmed that they had contacted those EU citizens who are already registered to vote.

A Torrington District Council spokesman said: "We wrote to all EU citizens in Torrington on April 11 that were registered on the electoral roll."

East Devon District Council sent a letter, enclosing the relevant forms, to all non-British EU citizens in the

district on Wednesday, April 10. They have been asked to complete the form and return it to the council by Tuesday May 7.

A Plymouth City Council spokesperson said they had been contacted text or email using the Government Notify service.

Teignbridge District Council said a form was sent to all EU electors already registered so that they can opt to vote in the UK.

Karen Waters from East Devon said her council had been "prompt and helpful" about the rights of her

husband, who is from Dublin.

Totnes MP Sarah Wollaston, a Change UK member, said in Parliament yesterday: "Telling EU citizens to go home and vote is an absolute insult. This is their home and none of this shambles is any of their making."

She called on Brandon Lewis, the Minister Without Portfolio, to say that no EU citizen who turns up to vote will be turned away. Dr Wollaston asked why the necessary forms and paperwork could not be available at polling stations.

## Dog had a worrying message

COASTGUARDS have issued a warning after a man went for a late night swim - leaving his dog on the beach with a note tied to its reading "my owner has gone to sea."

The discovery of the dog by a passer-by on Summerlease Beach in Bude prompted a major search. There was initially no sign of the animal's owner. A Bude coastguard spokesman said: "Upon mustering the team were contacted by Falmouth Coastguard Operations Centre and asked to stand down following confirmation that the owner had returned to the dog."

The coastguard team praised the member of the public who raised the alarm, saying: "Given the time of day and the nature of the message, the first informant certainly made the right decision in calling 999."

"We would always advise against being in or entering the sea after dark, but if you must, to consider the possible implications on leaving a message attached to a pet that could potentially be misconstrued. If at all possible leave the pet at home or with a friend instead."

# 'No end in sight' to delay over broadband

A PROGRAMME to bring super-fast broadband to nearly 50,000 homes and businesses in the rural South West is effectively on indefinite hold, a group of parish councils has warned.

Connecting Devon and Somerset (CDS), run by the two county councils, has put out little public information about the seven-month contractual hold-up which comes on top of five years of previous delays, says the set of 39 parish councils.

"It is anyone's guess as to when rural properties in Devon and Somerset will get the fast broadband service that those who live in urban areas today take for granted," said Heather Stallard, who chairs the Blackdown Hills Parish Network.

The latest delay to the project, backed by £31 million of public money, began when CDS put the deal on hold after the contractor, Gigaclear, failed to hit a target.

Gigaclear said the collapse of Carilion, which was doing civil engineering work, was to blame. The further setback means the programme will not meet a deadline for the release of Government cash.

Last month hopes were raised that

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the money would be earmarked in Government spending plans set for review this autumn. Now there are worries that the review might not happen this year because of the disruption caused by the Brexit process.

A CDS spokesperson said the body shared the communities' frustration.

CDS and the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) required a revised schedule from Gigaclear showing how it would deliver its contractual obligations, the spokesman added. The "period of uncertainty" could not continue indefinitely.

CDS was working with the department "to investigate all possible options", while the Treasury was finalising an agreement for a funding extension with DCMS as part of the spending review process.

"The effect of such an extension would be to provide CDS with the flexibility to either agree an acceptable revised timetable with Gigaclear to complete a new ultrafast full-fibre network or for CDS to pursue alternative full-fibre solutions for residents and businesses," the spokesperson said.

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