



Democracy SOS

Publishing information

Democracy SOS © Henry Tam 2025

Published by Citizen Network
in association with Unlock Democracy and Compass

ISBN download: 978-1-912712-56-4

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Saving Democracy

an appeal to those with political power

To those in government at all levels, politicians elected or hoping to be elected, officials appointed as decision makers or advisors, and more generally, citizens whose votes and voices can influence political choices – we appeal to you to support the swift and thorough implementation of the proposed actions outlined in this document to tackle the challenges facing our democracy.

Our democracy is being weakened. It is weakened by disinformation, by obstacles to ordinary citizens taking part, and by conditions that favour those with wealth and connections. There are many problems that should be tackled, such as poverty, energy insecurity, climate and ecological disruption, authoritarian threats, health problems, housing shortages, social isolation. But it is becoming more difficult for people wishing to serve the public interest to gain positions of power. We need a democracy that is thoughtful and respectful, and includes voices from across the spectrum, especially those often not heard. Instead, we have a democracy that feels angry, intolerant and fearful, hijacked by those who always seek to divide 'us' from 'them'.

Experience in the US has shown how power can end up in the hands of those who are prepared to undermine democratic governance. Democracy in the UK is also fragile. Often far fewer than half of the eligible citizens vote in elections. A large number of people – old and young – doubt if democratic politics can deliver the improvements they seek. Some are attracted by the rhetoric of authoritarian figures who openly despise inclusiveness and accountability, and subvert democracy by promoting disinformation and division.

There are those who think that so long as they can still win power on some occasion, they should use their time in office to deal with more 'pressing' matters than democratic reforms. What they overlook is that with democracy gravely weakened, they will find it increasingly difficult to get the support necessary to serve the interests of the public. Instead, political attention will keep being diverted to the vilification of scapegoats and the rolling out of measures that end up exacerbating the social, economic, and environmental problems we face.

Unless people see how they can have a meaningful part to play in determining how these different challenges are addressed by those in power, they will increasingly turn their backs on the prevailing system of government, or worse, give their support to demagogues and extremists who crave power to further their own ends, regardless of the suffering caused to others.

What can be done

Democracy SOS brings together the key actions that those in government can take to help save democracy from disengagement, misunderstanding, subversion, and other notable flaws. These actions do not cover the need for private sector bodies to democratise themselves, or what NGOs and communities themselves could do to support democracy, but they are crucial to putting the conditions in place for educators, civic-minded groups, and citizens in general, to improve and engage with democratic practices. By setting out the most pertinent proposals, we present a joined-up case for everyone in public office to help secure the democratic governance our country needs. We urge you to take stock of what diverse academics and practitioners have put forward and act on them, not in isolation, but as a total package that can bring about sustained improvements.

Our 8-point plan to save democracy

For democracy to function, it must enable citizens to participate meaningfully in shaping their own governance. People should not be hindered by the lack of reliable information, or marginalised by others' greater resources. They should be able to express their views peacefully, and effectively hold those in charge to account. Any voting system, unless it is backed by the appropriate infrastructure, is not by itself enough.

Set out below is a summary of the 8-point action plan for government bodies to implement to strengthen the connections between citizens and those holding public office, and give people meaningful influence over decisions that affect them. This is followed by the more detailed proposals set out under each of those eight areas for action.

The 8-Point Plan

1. Democracy & Learning

Ignorance is not bliss. People need to know how democracy is meant to work if democracy is going to work. Better support should be given to: citizenship education in schools; university involvement in raising public understanding of political and public policy issues; adult education in democracy and active citizenship; training for politicians and public officials in democratic engagement; and courses on democratic skills run by voluntary and community groups.

2. Democracy & Information

Disinformation subverts public understanding. People surrounded by lies and distortions cannot appraise policy options reliably. Effective safeguards should be put in place to: restrain the spread of false and unfounded information via online platforms, print and broadcast media; protect public service broadcasters; secure full transparency for the funding of those issuing research findings; and support independent fact-checking and accreditation of reporters.

3. Democracy & Voting

Every vote ought to count. But in practice many people are held back from or put off voting by obstacles in the system. Action should be taken to: adopt automatic voter registration; replace first-past-the-post by a form of proportional representational system; remove voter photo ID requirements; address issues with boundary reviews; and strengthen the independence and powers of the Electoral Commission.

4. Democracy & Deliberative Engagement

Division can only be bridged by dialogue. People identify common interests when they are able to share their ideas and concerns together. Investment should be provided to: expand community development capacity in public service; strengthen local government's role in bringing communities together; support community organising; and increase the use of deliberative engagement techniques.

5. Democracy & Subsidiarity

Remote decision-makers alienate communities. People want power to be exercised as close and responsive to them as possible. Commitments should be made to: devolve more real powers to all sub-national levels; raise awareness of what those with devolved powers do; strengthen local and neighbourhood democracy; support the voluntary and community sector's democratic role; and improve public understanding of transnational governance.

6. Democracy & Economic Inequalities

Disparity in wealth undercuts civic equality. People's democratic influence diminishes when faced with the power of rich individuals and corporations. Reforms should be introduced to: curtail money's impact on political decisions; prioritise the needs of deprived areas; tackle tax evasion and loopholes; require those with the most to pay more for the public good; limit the wealthy buying media control; and establish a universal basic income.

7. Democracy & Accountability

Those with authority must be answerable to the public. People cannot have confidence in those holding public office who can seemingly act with impunity. Changes should be brought in to: penalise deceptive communications; widen the application of recall procedures; provide a democratic basis for the second chamber; strengthen the independence and powers of the Information Commissioner's Office; and enhance the accountability for public procurement.

8. Democracy & Civil Rights

No one can be allowed to override our basic rights. People should respect majority decisions, but only if no one can be arbitrarily harmed or silenced. Protection should be enhanced by: removing any law that may stop people criticising state policies peacefully; curtailing attempts to incite hate and anger against minorities; securing commitment to the rule of law; guaranteeing basic human rights for all; and funding independent non-profit providers of legal advice.

1. Democracy & Learning

For democracy to function, citizens need to have at least a rudimentary understanding of the basics of democratic governance: what political options are in front of them and what they actually mean in practice; how to differentiate reliable claims from unfounded assertions; how to deal with conflicting viewpoints; and how to get their concerns registered.

While it is generally accepted that people need to learn more about matters relating to their health or finance, there is considerable hesitation about supporting learning in politics. Education, at every level, is falling short of developing better awareness of what democratic politics involves, or what the implications of public policy options are for individuals and their communities.

We therefore need our government to:

- ❖ Improve citizenship education in schools, by providing more effective curriculum guidance, quality teacher training, and appropriate Ofsted inspection.¹
- ❖ Foster university support for public learning in practical politics, by adding to the impact assessment of university performance (that informs funding decisions) the criterion of raising public understanding of political and public policy issues.²
- ❖ Increase adult education's support for learning for democracy and active citizenship, by ensuring that sufficient funding is available within the Adult Skills Fund (ASF), and adult learning organisations have the freedom and resources to provide such courses within the Tailored Learning element of the ASF alongside other courses which benefit health & wellbeing and building stronger communities.
- ❖ Improve politicians' and public officials' democratic engagement abilities, by providing them with training to develop skills in self-challenging, listening, facilitation, convening, and responsive community leadership.
- ❖ Enhance critical thinking skills and cooperative problem-solving, by promoting courses and events organised by peer-recognised groups in the voluntary and community sectors.³

2. Democracy & Information

Reliable information is the lifeblood of democracy. Citizens only have a real choice over which candidate to elect or what policy to support, if they can obtain accurate and timely information about the candidates and policy options. Supplanting information with deceitful materials leaves citizens with a false choice.

People with partisan political agendas have for decades extended their ownerships of media outlets. Their controls over press, broadcast, and social media have resulted in a substantial and continuous increase in the spreading of false and misleading information. The lack of effective regulatory oversight means that many people's political judgements are affected by systematic manipulations.

We therefore need our government to:

- ❖ Tackle the spread of misinformation and disinformation via social media, by setting up a robust financial penalty system to restrain social media companies from facilitating deception about matters of public interest (including the use of AI manipulation to deceive on their platforms).
- ❖ Curtail the dissemination of unfounded, inciteful, distorted information through print and online publications, by levying deterrent-level fines and enforcing the prominent display of apologies and corrections when such dissemination is detected.
- ❖ Safeguard the integrity of broadcast media, by protecting the financial and editorial independence of public service broadcasters (e.g., BBC, Channel 4), supporting the development of the BBC as a participatory public service mutual, and taking effective action against private broadcasters who produce false or misleading information.⁴
- ❖ Increase the transparency and accountability of researchers and think tanks, by requiring them to disclose their overall funders and the financing of particular reports.⁵
- ❖ Enhance the reliability of public information, by supporting the development of independent fact-checking bodies (such as the organisation, Full Fact), the British Association of Journalists' accreditation of professional reporters (to help differentiate them from just anyone claiming to be 'reporting the news', especially online), and the Media Reform Coalition's proposed establishment of a *Commission on Media and Democracy*.⁶

3. Democracy & Voting

Democracy is meant to give every citizen an equal say whenever an issue is put to a vote. Everyone is supposed to be in a position to cast their vote when their input is being sought. But in practice, whether or not a citizen gets the opportunity to vote, and how much impact that vote has compared with other votes cast, depends on the design of the voting system.

It has long been recognised that a crude first-past-the-post voting system creates many safe seats where votes for anyone other than the incumbent party are known to have little value. Furthermore, partisan politicians have over the years devised various ways to reduce the voting impact of certain groups of citizens they believe are likely to vote against them. These have included changes to voter registration methods, voter eligibility, contrived requirements for voter ID, and electoral boundaries.

We therefore need our government to:

- ❖ Implement automatic voter registration, by adopting a system that identifies potential voters, checks their eligibility, and where appropriate adds them to the local electoral register, without the onus being left entirely with individuals to make formal applications to be registered.⁷
- ❖ Convince voters that every vote counts, by moving away from first-past-the-post to a proportional system which still allows voters to choose between individual candidates.⁸
- ❖ Increase voter participation, by removing obstacles such as voter photo ID.
- ❖ Ensure electoral boundaries are fair and up to date, by safeguarding the independence of the different boundary review commissions, allowing the sizes of electoral units the flexibility (e.g. 10%) to reflect local community identities, and using the latest census population figures (as opposed to electoral roll numbers that miss out millions of people) in determining boundaries and seats.⁹
- ❖ Uphold the integrity of voting arrangements, by strengthening the independence of the Electoral Commission through scrapping the government's power to issue a *Strategy and Policy Statement for the Electoral Commission*, and strengthening the powers of the Electoral Commission to limit the level of campaign funding, and tackle foreign money in UK politics.¹⁰

4. Democracy & Deliberative Engagement

Democratic politics offers an alternative to rule in the interest of particular individuals or groups. However, common interests can only emerge when people have the opportunity to meet, share ideas and learn from each other. Otherwise, public decisions can end up being highly divisive. Unfortunately, cash-strapped councils have been selling off publicly owned spaces and buildings, while funding for all forms of community development has been drastically cut. This reduces the capacity to support citizens working out together what collective action should be taken.

Politicians have tended to rely too much on unreflective polls, and neglected the use of deliberative processes to ascertain what citizens would choose if they had the chance to explore different options. This is compounded by the media's reliance on simplistic argumentative formats, and the proliferation of provocative and polarising communications by politicians that diminish the prospect of people finding common ground.

We therefore need our government to:

- ❖ Redress community fragmentation, by investing in community development as an integral part of public services, with public bodies (and particularly local government) funded to recruit and train staff, create spaces for discussion, and support democratic activity, engaging citizens in forming collective objectives and action plans.¹¹
- ❖ Recognise the role of local government as a convenor and funder of community building, social capital and deliberative infrastructure, by supporting councils in promoting civic dialogues and facilitating consensus building, beyond service delivery and economic development.
- ❖ Support the development of local community understanding and informed collaboration, by learning from past community organising programmes and funding work that enables people to build trust and relations in determining common objectives.¹²
- ❖ Increase and improve the use of deliberative engagement techniques by all public bodies, by pooling the findings and guidance that have been issued, and advising public officials to apply them to promote greater deliberative input from citizens in assessing public policy options.¹³
- ❖ Substitute top-down edicts and non-deliberative referenda, by setting up deliberative arrangements with demographically representative participants, especially in cases where the policy in question concerns highly complex and contested claims which need to be carefully examined and discussed before informed views can be given.¹⁴

5. Democracy & Subsidiarity

People can relate more to decisions being considered at a level closer to them. At the same time, they do not want to be involved in making decisions that can have little impact because they are not connected with sufficiently powerful institutions.

Democracy must take into account subsidiarity if it is to give people greater efficacy.

When the power to make decisions has been moved to higher or lower levels of government in the UK, the issue of how it connects with citizens has generally been overlooked. The disempowering of local authorities through drastic cuts since 2010, the reduction of the number of local councillors, the introduction of regional and sub-regional bodies that are remote to citizens, the inconsistency in devolving powers – have all exacerbated civic disengagement.

We therefore need our government to:

- ❖ Reduce centralisation, by devolving more real powers to sub-national levels; requiring those with devolved powers to inform and engage citizens more effectively in the development of their work; and responding positively to *We're Right Here's* proposals for *Community Covenants* and *A Right to Shape Public Services* to give local people a meaningful input into the policies that affect them.¹⁵
- ❖ Improve public awareness of the role and impact of elected office-holders at the sub-national level, by supporting independent reporting and scrutiny of their policy actions (e.g., directly elected mayors, combined authorities, Police Commissioners, NHS Trust governors, etc.)
- ❖ Strengthen local democracy, by allowing local authorities to innovate; enabling them to adopt a more equitable and sustainable local taxation system and raise funds without central capping; supporting councils to develop into public bodies that provide services in partnership with citizens, with a cooperative and transparent culture; and pressing for further devolution of power from large-scale local authorities to neighbourhoods, towns and villages.
- ❖ Support the voluntary and community sector (VCS) to fulfil its democratic role in examining and shaping public policies, by ensuring funding for VCS infrastructure which provides vital support and advice at local and national levels; and adhere to the *Civil Society Covenant* published by the Government which incorporates elements of the principles of a strong *Civil Society Covenant* recommended by NCVO.¹⁶
- ❖ Enhance the democratic basis of transnational governmental arrangements, by committing the UK government, in partnership with the devolved administrations, to raise public understanding of those arrangements and their implications.¹⁷

6. Democracy & Economic Inequalities

Citizens cannot be equal democratically if their respective influence diverges radically through economic inequalities. Democracy is notably diminished when a few can buy great influence with their money, while many are so poor they have little time or resources to engage with politics.

Economic inequalities in the UK fell from the 1910s to 1970s, but have risen since 1980. A plutocratic elite (in the UK as well as internationally) has been able, through political donations, corporate lobbying, privatisation, and litigation, steered policy decisions in their favour. Austerity has decimated many public services, and left even more people in a precarious and alienated state.

We therefore need our government to:

- ❖ Curtail money's influence on government activities, by strengthening transparency rules on corporate lobbying, limiting party donations, disallowing the offer of gifts (above a certain level), and barring elected politicians from holding paid directorships and consultancy roles, and setting a cap on any earnings above their core salary.
- ❖ Reduce the power gap between the rich and the poor, by prioritising investment in critical public services (especially in the most deprived areas), and strengthening enforcement against rule-breakers riding roughshod over the public interest (e.g., evading taxes, obtaining favours by corrupt means, breaching public safety legislation, etc).¹⁸
- ❖ Increase civic solidarity, by prioritising the taxing of the wealthiest, taking up the tax reform proposals put forward by Patriotic Millionaires UK and Tax Justice UK, and setting up citizens' assemblies to inform the use of the additional revenue to address public concerns.¹⁹
- ❖ Stop the expansion of plutocratic control over the media, by bringing in stricter limits on media ownership to guard against the erosion of fair and objective reporting, giving local communities the financial and regulatory support to take common ownership of local media outlets, and setting out explicit guidance on remedies to break down concentrations in media ownership (such as public interest obligations and forced divestment of assets).²⁰
- ❖ Give all citizens a sense of economic security and greater capacity to participate democratically, by establishing the provision of universal basic income (along with additional support – e.g., UBI Plus – for those with disabilities and other significant disadvantages).²¹

7. Democracy & Accountability

Disillusionment with democracy has been fuelled by the perceived, as well as actual, failure of politicians to carry out what they have assured electors they would do. Many people feel there is no point in electing politicians who cannot be trusted.

With politicians' terms of office set at 4 or 5 years, citizens are mostly left powerless in holding those they have elected to account between elections. In a safe seat, constituents may find it impossible to get rid of whoever represents the dominant party in that seat. The recall procedure for MPs is limited in scope (with narrow criteria) and does not extend to other public offices. With the House of Lords, there is no democratic mechanism to remove those in power.

We therefore need our government to:

- ❖ Require politicians and public officials to be open and honest with citizens to build trust, by creating a legal duty of candour on public authorities based on the '*Hillsborough Law*' [the Public Authority (Accountability) Bill]; and adopting measures that would mean that anyone holding (or formally seeking) public office who makes deliberately and seriously deceptive statements could lose their position if found guilty of a clear breach.²²
- ❖ Strengthen the accountability of public office holders, by applying the extended criteria for recall (i.e. covering deceptive practices as well as criminal offences) to members of the second legislative chamber, QUANGO board members, local councillors, elected mayors, Police Commissioners, as well as MPs.
- ❖ Provide a democratic basis for the second legislative chamber, by organising public discussions about its potential functions (equal to the Commons, limited to scrutiny, or some other role), its membership (with options including: a directly or indirectly elected chamber, a fully or partly elected chamber, one structured as a Citizens' Assembly filled by sortition, or one appointed by an independent body), and its members being subject to recall arrangements.²³
- ❖ Improve accessibility to information about public governance and services, by granting the Information Commissioner's Office greater independence and resources, enabling it to scrutinise and report on the effectiveness of public bodies in responding to FOI (Freedom of Information) requests, and extending FOI obligations to private providers of public services.²⁴
- ❖ Tackle questionable allocation or use of public funds, by increasing the transparency of public procurement, strengthening external scrutiny, setting out clear penalties for procurers and contractors, and specifying the conditions under which Ministers may or may not be involved in procurement decisions.²⁵

8. Democracy & Civil Rights

Democracy is dependent on the trust of citizens that their lives would not be arbitrarily harmed by those in power. Effective guarantees of civil rights are necessary to assure people that in participating in any collective decision-making process, no political leader, or a majority vote, can single them out for ill treatment for expressing their minority views or simply for being different.

In recent decades, instead of emphasising the importance of respecting and protecting the rights of citizens to live their lives regardless of their ethnicity, religion, gender, customs etc, so long as they do not threaten or cause injury to others, some politicians have gone in the opposite direction to fuel intolerance and hate, and champion prejudice against vulnerable people as an electoral selling point.

We therefore need our government to:

- ❖ Ensure the state cannot use its power to silence criticism, by removing all legislation that provides a basis for the prosecution of non-violent critics of state policies (e.g., commentators, academics, charity advocates, peaceful protestors, etc.)
- ❖ Curtail politicians' use of misinformation to promote anger, hatred and intolerance (in the guise of 'free speech' or 'political campaigning'), by establishing rules and independent adjudication to deal with breaches.
- ❖ Secure cross-party commitment to upholding electoral democracy and the rule of law, by asking all political candidates to sign up to ruling out passing any law or taking any action that can undermine the work of our independent judiciary, the Electoral Commission, the National Audit office, the Civil Service Commission, the Commissioner for Public Appointments, and other similar bodies; and publicising the names of those who refuse to sign.
- ❖ Protect all citizens from persecution, by continuing to follow the ECHR as the effective safeguard against every form of arbitrary intimidation, arrest, imprisonment, or torture of citizens; and exposing any attempt to substitute the protection offered by the ECHR with an alternative which would lower the level of protection, weaken the ability to enforce protection, and make it harder to access the courts for redress.
- ❖ Help citizens understand and uphold their rights as defined by the law, by ensuring adequate funding for law centres and Citizen Advice Bureaus, etc., to give support where it is needed.

Moving Forward

what we can all do

We ask our fellow citizens to join us in calling on the government and all who hold public office in the UK, devolved administrations, local authorities, and other public bodies, to consider the above proposals, and take the necessary steps to address the weaknesses in our democracy.

Day to day political pressures to deal with social, economic and environmental problems can cause those in power to think that there are more urgent priorities to tackle. It could be tempting to patch up a few of the most glaring problems in our democracy, while any full-scale rescue mission keeps getting pushed to the back of the queue. But without a well-functioning democratic system, the gap between citizens and those in government widens, making it ever more likely that an irresponsible few can win power to serve their own interests at the expense of the public good.

Demagogues, manipulators, plutocrats, extremists pose a serious threat through their capacity to exploit the flaws in the system. A democracy undermined by disinformation, wide economic disparity, and partisan obstacles, can easily open the door to authoritarians who have no respect for democracy at all. Once they gain public office, they would use their power with little regard for the people, and gravely exacerbate the social, economic and environmental problems we are facing. Worst of all, they would subvert democracy by making it more difficult for people to criticise them, or elect their opponents in future contests.

The danger is real. We can all see the consequences of people feeling alienated by the political system, being held back from voting by insidious obstacles, or siding with manipulators who feed them lies and distortions. Anger fuelling harmful policies. Apathy allowing the self-serving to take charge. This must change. To save democracy, we need to act now. The next step is for those with power in government to set out their commitments to take forward the *Democracy SOS* proposals – backed by a clear timetable and resource allocations.

About Democracy SOS

Many proposals have over time been put forward for strengthening democracy in the UK. Some are concerned with formal constitutional changes; some with electoral procedures; some with participatory practices; some with educational issues; some with curtailing the spread of disinformation; and others with tackling money's undue influence. However, without a united front, pressures for change are dissipated, and the demands for improvement remain low on the priority list of those who have the power to meet them.

Citizen Network has taken stock of the proposals that are directed at those in public office, and in partnership with Unlock Democracy, Compass, and others, put together a joined-up case for their implementation. While individual organisations will continue to campaign on the issues they are specifically concerned with, having a collective platform means that public attention can be more sharply drawn to what needs to be done, and policy makers will more readily see what actions they should support to improve the current state of democracy.

Democracy SOS provides a succinct overview of what needs to be done by those in public office. There are many important actions that should be taken by communities, private organisations and individual citizens as well, but our focus here is to get elected politicians to make the necessary changes as a top priority.

Author

Democracy SOS is written by Henry Tam, drawing on the support of a wide range of democracy advocates, the proposals they have formulated, and suggestions for extending innovative practices. His books on politics include *Time to Save Democracy*; *Whose Government is it*; and *Communitarianism: politics, society & public policy*. He was Head of Civil Renewal in the UK government, and Director of the Forum for Youth Participation & Democracy, University of Cambridge.

Acknowledgements

The author gratefully acknowledges the helpful feedback on earlier drafts from Diane Warburton, Helena Kettleborough, Gabriel Chanan, Simon Duffy, Marj Mayo, Tom Brake, Louis Strappazzon, Jason Leman, Neal Lawson, Sue Goss, Simon Parkinson, Chris Butcher, Liz Moore, Nick Gardham, Perry Walker, Tom Chivers, James Robertson, Andrew Blick, and Mark E. Thomas.

Notes

¹ See also **Make Space for Citizenship** as set out by the Association for Citizenship Teaching: <https://www.teachingcitizenship.org.uk/make-space-for-citizenship/>

² For examples of universities' impartial initiatives in support of such learning, see Titus Alexander's **Universities' role in teaching practical politics**, in Henry Tam (ed), **Who's Afraid of Political Education** (Policy Press, 2023).

³ Courses such as **Plan 12 – Learn to Transform** developed for young people by UNICEF: <https://www.unicef.org/lac/en/plan-12-learn-transform> ; or those utilising the Take Part approach: <http://takepart.org/manageContent.aspx?object.id=10239>

⁴ See Media Reform Coalition's **Media Manifesto 2024**'s Proposal 1 'A More Democratic, Diverse and Independent Public Service Media'; and their publication, **Our Mutual Friend: The BBC in the Digital Age**.

⁵ In relation to the funding of think-tanks, see the investigative work of Open Democracy.

⁶ For more info on Full Fact: <https://fullfact.org/about/>; on BAJ's accreditation, see: <https://bajunion.org.uk> ; and on Media Reform Coalition's proposal, see Proposal 5 in their **Media Manifesto 2024**.

⁷ The Elections and Elected Bodies (Wales) Act has been passed by the Welsh Parliament to set up pilots to test different methods for identifying potential voters who should be added to the voters registers held by local authorities. See: Welsh Government, 'Automatic voter registration pilots to take place in Wales': <https://www.gov.wales/automatic-voter-registration-pilots-take-place-wales> . More information on automatic voter registration can be obtained from Unlock Democracy.

⁸ The Single Transferable Vote system is the most commonly proposed option which delivers proportional representation (unlike the Alternative Vote or Supplementary Vote), and allows voters to choose specific candidates (unlike a Party List system). For more information, contact Unlock Democracy or the Electoral Reform Society.

⁹ See the case made by the Electoral Reform Society: <https://electoral-reform.org.uk/campaigns/upgrading-our-democracy/fair-boundaries>

¹⁰ More information can be obtained from Unlock Democracy.

¹¹ For more information, explore the archived information from the Community Development Foundation: <https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/c/F275952> ; see also this guide to Asset Based Community Development: <https://www.nurtureddevelopment.org/asset-based-community-development/> .

¹² See evaluations of Community First programme in support of community organising: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/evaluation-community-organisers-and-community-first-programme>

¹³ For example, participatory budgeting, Planning for Real, Nature Neighbourhoods, Citizens' Assemblies, etc.

¹⁴ Citizens' Assemblies, for example, command high levels of public trust. In cities and regions such as Paris and East Belgium, permanent citizens' assemblies have been established to guide public decision-making.

¹⁵ On We're Right Here's proposals, see: <https://www.right-here.org/asks/>

¹⁶ On the Civil Society Covenant, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/civil-society-covenant/civil-society-covenant>. See also issues raised in the Civil Society Futures report: https://baringsfoundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Research_Report_Summary_CSF.pdf

¹⁷ For example, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Republic of Estonia is tasked with explaining to the public their country's work with global partners in tackling poverty in the world – see, **Raising awareness and global education**: <https://www.vm.ee/en/activity/development-cooperation-and-humanitarian-aid/raising-awareness-and-global-education> ; in Canada, the government funds the NGO, Cooperation Canada, to support work relating to global cooperation, including organising learning events: <https://cooperation.ca/build-capacity/>

¹⁸ Taxpayers Against Poverty has advocated for a minimum income, truly affordable housing, and access to quality and social healthcare for all citizens. See: www.taxpayersagainstopoverty.org.uk

¹⁹ For a summary of the tax reform proposals, **Ten tax reforms to raise £60 billion for public services and a fairer economy**, see: <https://patrioticmillionaires.uk/latest-news/policy-recommendations-2024>

²⁰ For more details, see Proposal 2 'Ending the Abuses and Concentrations of Media Power', and Proposal 4 '**A New Deal for Local Media**', set out in Media Reform Coalition's **Media Manifesto 2024**.

²¹ More information about universal basic income can be accessed from the [UBI Lab Network](#) and [BIEN](#) (Basic Income Erath Network). See also **Designing basic income pilots for community development: What are the key community concerns? Evidence from citizen engagement in Northern England**, by Howard, N., Gregory, G., Johnson, E. A. et al, **Local Development and Society Volume 6, 2025 – Issue 1**, Taylor & Francis Online: www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/26883597.2023.2269483#abstract

²² Measures on dealing with deceptive statements have been introduced by the Welsh government Senedd. Compassion in Politics has also advocated putting the MPs' code of conduct on a statutory footing, and establishing an independent Ethics Commission to oversee MPs' behaviour: https://www.compassioninpolitics.com/clean_up_politics_campaign_update

²³ YouGov has found people have far higher trust in members of Citizens' Assembly than Members of Parliament, and more favour replacing the House of Lords by a rolling Citizens' Assembly than other options: https://ygo-assets-websites-editorial-emea.yougov.net/documents/SortitionFoundation_CitizensAssembly_240514_W.pdf

²⁴ See MySociety's report on reforming Freedom of Information: <https://research.mysociety.org/html/reforming-foi/#executive-summary>

²⁵ See report on **Improving Accountability in Government Procurement** by the Institute for Government: https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/sites/default/files/2024-09/Improving-accountability-government-procurement_0.pdf

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