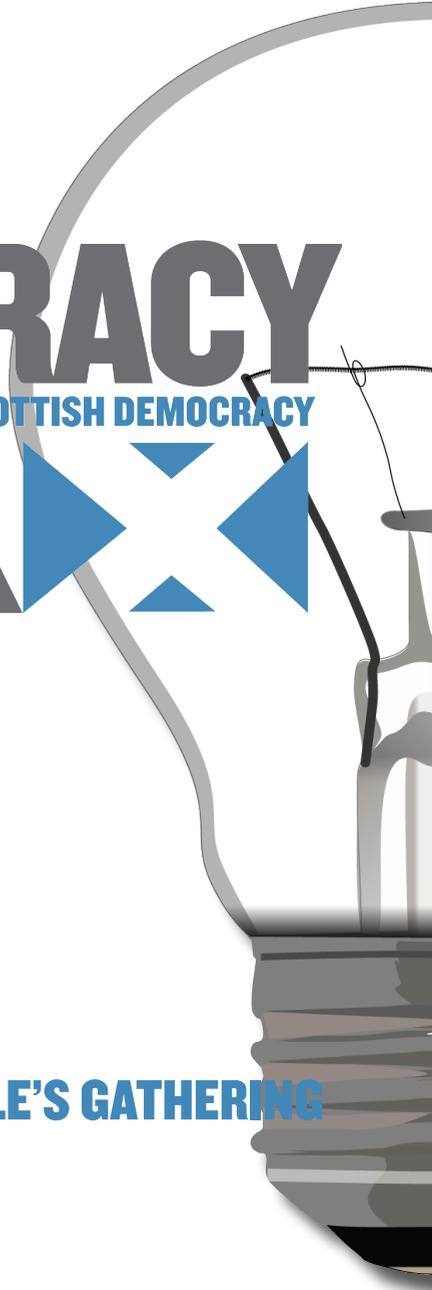


DEMOCRACY

AN INQUIRY INTO THE FUTURE OF SCOTTISH DEMOCRACY

MAX

THE FINDINGS OF THE PEOPLE'S GATHERING





The People's Gathering was organised in association with the Public Policy Network. They advised on the deliberative democracy format of the day and organised the involvement of our volunteer facilitators

The Public Policy Network is the knowledge exchange interface of the Academy of Government at the University of Edinburgh

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September 2012



POLITICS IS TOO IMPORTANT TO BE LEFT TO POLITICIANS

THE FINDINGS OF THE PEOPLE'S GATHERING

DEMOCRACY
AN INQUIRY INTO THE FUTURE OF SCOTTISH DEMOCRACY
MAX

DEMOCRACY MAX

The findings of the People's Gathering

INTRODUCTION

WHAT MAKES A GOOD DEMOCRACY 3

THE PEOPLE'S GATHERING 9

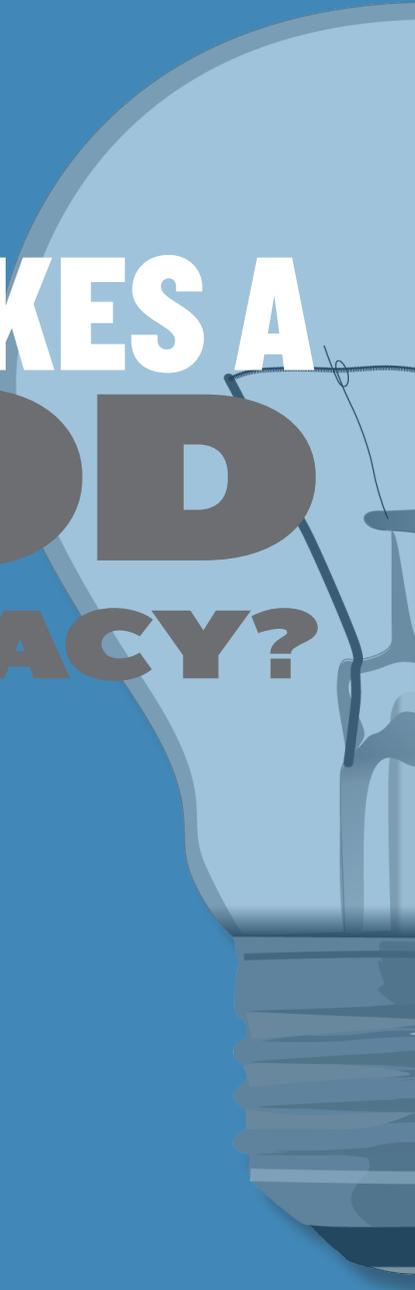
SOVEREIGNTY OF THE PEOPLE 11

DEFENDING OUR DEMOCRACY 19

HOW DO WE WRITE THE RULES 25

NEXT STEPS 31

WHAT MAKES A **GOOD** DEMOCRACY?





ASSROOTS REPRESENTATION

APATHY?

WHAT WOULD MAKE PEOPLE VOTE?

THEIR DIFFERENT
VALUES BEHIND

LOCAL CONTROL

DISCUSSION

VOTING WITHOUT DISCUSSION DOES NOT WORK

EDUCATION ON DELIBERATIVE PROCESSES

BRITISH POLITICAL PARTIES?

WANT CANDIDATES STRAND ON SINGLE IS

PARLIAM
ETY



The most recent Hansard Society Audit of Political Engagement stated ‘Voters are disgruntled, disillusioned and disengaged’.

And after countless scandals, crises and inquiries, is it any wonder that people think politics isn’t working for them?

At the Electoral Reform Society Scotland, we think that the referendum debate is an opportunity to challenge our political system to change, to confound the low expectations voters have of politics, and to deliver on the high hopes they still hold for democracy in Scotland.

Much of the current debate around Scotland’s constitutional future is led by political parties. ERS Scotland wants to create a non-partisan space where those with different views can debate and discuss and where political rhetoric can be challenged and unpicked.

‘Democracy Max’ is an independent inquiry into ‘What makes a good Scottish democracy’ with the aim of achieving the following objectives:

- ▶ To debate, in a non-partisan space, the nature of democracy in a changing world and begin to describe what a good Scottish democracy looks like.
- ▶ To deepen our understanding and inform our position on the referendum debate and what concerns people about our political systems, with a view to future campaigning.
- ▶ To help shape the language of the debate around the referendum to ensure the idea of what kind of democracy we want to live in is part and parcel of the debate.

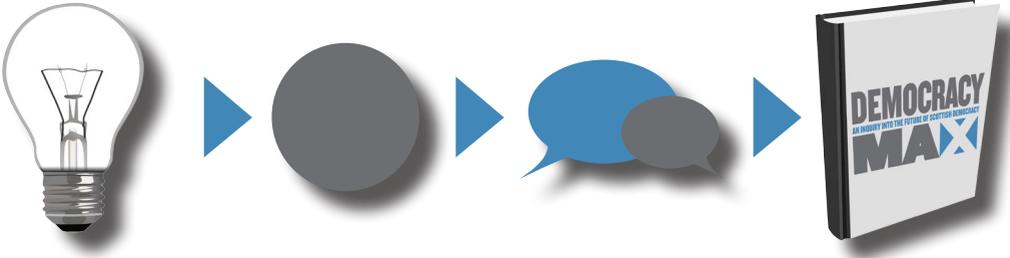
THE PROCESS:

These findings will be presented to a group of leading thinkers, commentators, academics, activists and campaigners. They will participate in three distinct roundtable sessions supervised by ERS Scotland.

There will be two sessions on each of the following themes: ‘sovereignty of the people’,

DEMOCRACY MAX

The findings of the People's Gathering



‘defending our democracy’ and ‘how do we write the rules?’

Each roundtable will feed into the next, allowing learning to travel through the whole process and for areas of overlap between the phases to be considered, but also providing for fresh thinking and different perspectives and expertise to be applied.

Each roundtable will report to a public event. There will be regular interim papers and a final publication; **A Vision of a Good Scottish Democracy**, which we will use to reflect on future ERS Scotland campaigns, and to work with civic society to challenge our elected representatives to describe what they might do to help lead us towards that vision.

We hope this will promote the

ideals of ERS to show valuing all voices and effectively holding those in power to account are essential parts of a ‘good democracy’.

THE PEOPLE:

This project is motivated by the simple belief that politics is just too important to be left to politicians. We would like to take this opportunity to thank the people who made this process possible.

OUR DELEGATES:

Rob Alexander
Jenny Allan
David Atiyah
Liam Beattie
Jim Bennett
Alice Brown
Hollie Cameron

Geoff Carlin
Jane Carnall
Paul Cockburn
Ian Cowie
Barbara Evans
Rosalie Faithfull
Cath Ferguson
Fiona Fisher
Maurice Frank
Hugh Gaffney
Colin Gilchrist
Ginny Graham
Lily Greenan
Carol Hainey
Alex Hamilton
Philip Hunt
Richard Laird
Carolyn Leckie
Jennie Macfie
Allan MacKenzie
Alasdair Mann
Louise Marwick
Allison McDonald
Louise McGurk
Rhona McLaren
Colin Moss
Fergus Mutch
Robbie Pennington
Jack Phillips
George Pitcher
Susan Rae
Kate Ramsden
Alistair Reid
Roisin Reilly
Carolyn Roberts
Ben Saunders

Duncan Service
Christopher Silver
Keith Simpson
Stuart Smith
Isabelle Smith
Margare Stewart
Jen Stout
Eleanor Swan
Kirsten Thornton
Norman Tinlin
Andrew Verrecchia
Jamie Walker
Sandra Webster
Alan Weir
Robert Wilson

OUR FACILITATORS:

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Ali Black
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Wendy Faulkner
Jess Garland
Malcolm Harvey
Jelte Harnmeijer
Jenny MacKenzie
John McCarthy
Susan Pettie
Kaela Scott
Kay Smith
David Stevenson
Elizabeth Stevenson
Ben Stollery
Tom Webster





What is your personality?
1. ...
2. ...
3. ...

Financial Planning Service

THE PEOPLE'S GATHERING

To begin the inquiry, ERS Scotland organised a 'People's Gathering' which brought together as representative a sample as possible of Scottish people. Over 80 delegates gathered in Edinburgh to engage in some radical thinking about Scotland's democracy. They were asked to imagine:

**IT'S 2030, AND SCOTLAND
IS ADMIRER AS A SHINING
EXAMPLE OF DEMOCRACY
AND DEMOCRATIC
PARTICIPATION.**

**WHAT THREE ASPECTS
OF THIS FUTURE SOCIETY
PLEASE YOU MOST?**

DEMOCRACY MAX

The findings of the People's Gathering

Delegates were grouped around tables with up to eight delegates per table, with two facilitators to ensure smooth conversation and to record thoughts. In the morning session they discussed their blue sky ideas about Scotland's democratic future and in the afternoon thought about how we might achieve those things, or what was preventing them from happening.

THE FINDINGS:

The ideas that came out of the People's Gathering as presented in this report will form the basis of the roundtable debates which will seek to distil those ideas into a 'vision of a good Scottish democracy'. A vision that is informed by people, not just politicians.

This process may involve difficult discussions about the feasibility of the ideas, about why some of the ideals have not yet been implemented, and about the forces that prevent change. It will also present a challenge to our panellists to think about how the ideas proposed by the People's Gathering might be achieved in

a future Scotland, and what that future Scotland might look like.

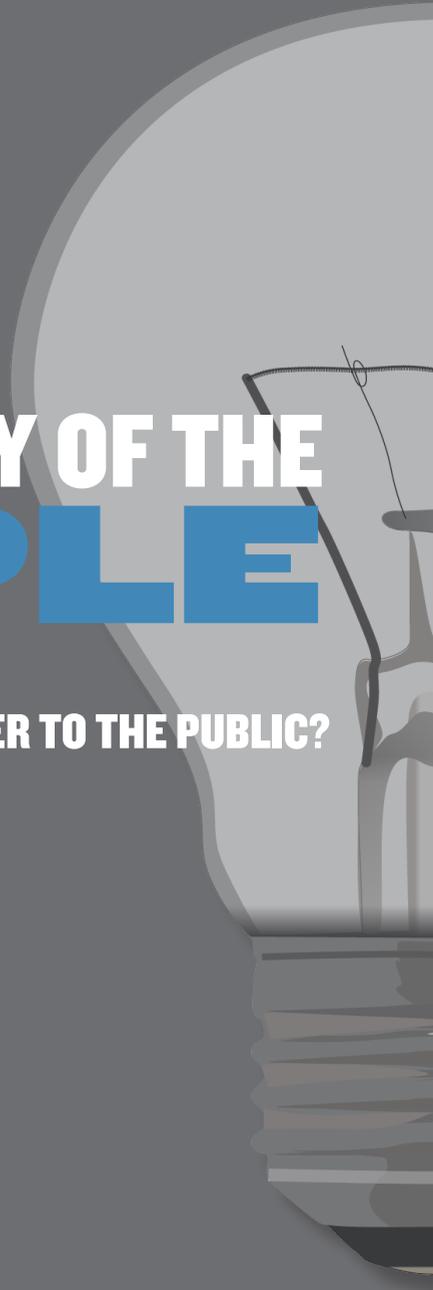
We have organised the findings from the People's Gathering into the three broad themes:

- ▶ **1) Sovereignty of the people**
How do we return more power to the public?
- ▶ **2) Defending our democracy**
How do we stop vested interests having too much influence?
- ▶ **3) How do we write the rules**
How do we get the checks and balances our democracy needs?

Delegates travelled from across Scotland to share their opinions and concerns, so we hope our panellists will respect that commitment. These findings offer a starting point that presents the views expressed by our delegates when they were given the chance to speak and to be heard. Some opinions are more controversial than others and some are perhaps less than practical. Considering therefore why such suggestions were made will be an integral aspect of our roundtable discussions.

1) SOVEREIGNTY OF THE PEOPLE

HOW DO WE RETURN MORE POWER TO THE PUBLIC?



DEMOCRACY MAX

The findings of the People's Gathering

Sovereignty of the people is a constitutional principle long recognised in Scotland which provides that the Scottish people have the sovereign right to determine the form of government best suited to their needs. This is different from the concept of the UK parliament being sovereign. Under the heading of Sovereignty of the People , we have grouped issues raised at the People's Gathering which reflect this ideal of the Scottish people in participating and engaging in politics, and being the ideal to whom the state should be accountable.

We hope that the first phase of the roundtables will discuss the accountability of the state and its representatives, the participation of the people in those processes of accountability and how to ensure the diversity of the population is represented.

The outcome aimed for would be suggestions for initiatives, interventions and processes that will improve genuine accountability and ensure more citizens are empowered to participate.

Active participation in politics was a strong recurring theme from the People's Gathering. The discussion ranged from wanting to encourage people to stand for election and thinking about what might be discouraging them from doing so, to thinking about why turn out in elections is so low and what might be done to re-engage people with the political process. Delegates also considered that knowledge of political processes and an informed society were integral to ensuring active participation.

As well as those practical aspects, it was felt that part of what is discouraging participation is the way we manage our political structures. Delegates felt party politics and the increase in professional politics were turning people off politics, and that the failure of our institutions to 'look like us' means people don't feel that they can influence politics.

GREATER PARTICIPATION:

Delegates asked why so few people participate in politics at any level and suggested analysis and work

to promote initiatives would be helpful. Delegates felt that financial barriers to standing for election should be removed. The time commitment and unique challenges of re-entering the job market after serving as a politician should also be considered. Solutions suggested included providing grants or funds to allow participation in elections. The right to “democratic leave” or workplace flexitime to include time off for community & voluntary service or a secondment structure for political representation was brought up by a number of delegates. It was also acknowledged that positive role models are needed to encourage people to stand.

In 2030...

There is no income barrier to participating in elections

Most people stand for election or serve on a community council at some point

IMPROVED TURNOUT:

Delegates considered compulsory voting but felt if it was introduced there would need to be a ‘none of the above option’ on the ballot paper. Indeed, even outside of whether voting should be made compulsory or not (and some delegates strongly disagreed that it should), it was considered whether a ‘none of the above’ option could serve as a means to express willingness to engage with the system but being unable to identify with any of the parties or candidates.

Other ideas discussed around turnout included online voting and registration. Changing polling day away from a Thursday was also mentioned. Lowering the voting age was discussed, with a general feeling that this would assist in young people becoming fully engaged, as well as being a welcome change.

Some delegates talked about whether more referendums would encourage greater participation, with a suggestion they be held

DEMOCRACY MAX

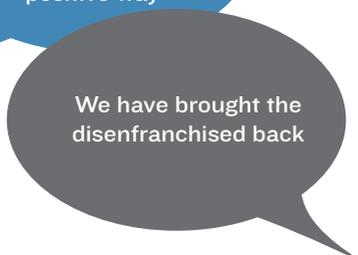
The findings of the People's Gathering

alongside elections. The ability to call referendums by petition was also suggested as a way of reconnecting people to politics and voting – with one idea being that the current Scottish Parliament Public Petitions Committee could include an option to submit the issue to a referendum.

In 2030...



All our young people are fully engaged in the democratic process and feel able to influence it in a positive way



We have brought the disenfranchised back

AN INFORMED SOCIETY:

Delegates very strongly felt that if people were to re-engage and have faith in politics again, society needed to be much better informed.

This more informed Scotland would ideally have free cradle to grave education, with more thought given to early education and an emphasis on, if not a compulsory element of, citizenship education.

Beyond the formal school system, a desire was expressed for education in the community, to inform about changes in the system, and how to access politicians and politics.

Workplace democracy was also considered to have a role in informing society. The role of the arts was considered. This more day-to-day information and education were felt to require a genuine process of disseminating information to the people and facilitating feedback from them.

Delegates felt this citizenship education should have considerable breadth. It should include practicalities, like information not just about who makes the decisions, but also how the decisions are made, and should enable people to understand the system – who governs what, and to make informed decisions. It should also include education on how to access politicians and politics, perhaps including surgeries in schools, as

well as learning about deliberative processes and what it means to be a responsible citizen.

Other practical aspects suggested included a greater emphasis on pragmatic economic skills and issues, an emphasis on skills and motivation to participate in local and national democratic processes, and a consideration of what it means to make good choices.

It was felt that as well as informing society and improving political engagement, this future vision of better employment and more choice in education would lead to better engagement with society and less apathy.

More holistically, it was hoped that any education system would nurture, not suppress, aspiration, and would develop people's confidence in their ability to succeed.

Importantly, delegates noted that the language used as part of any informing and educating process must be accessible.

In 2030...

Being a responsible citizen is part of the curriculum

In 2030... There is a greater presence and involvement at both primary and high school level of politics and the role it plays

ACCOUNTABLE ELECTED OFFICIALS:

Delegates felt strongly that there should be constraints on professional politics. Possible implications discussed included that politicians should serve limited terms, that remuneration should be linked to average wage levels, and that a power of recall should be introduced. It was suggested that MPs themselves need to be more engaged, with the fact of House of Commons attendance being rarely at 100% noted. It was also felt that whilst in opposition elected representatives lose power and influence in a way that means they

DEMOCRACY MAX

The findings of the People's Gathering

are not given the chance to truly represent their constituents.

Delegates would like methods to address this imbalance to be considered

In 2030...



Elected members can be held accountable for wrongdoing

ELECTORAL REFORM:

More proportional voting systems were seen as desirable. It was acknowledged that Scotland already has fairer systems in place at all levels short of elections to the House of Commons.

Improvements and alternatives suggested included open lists and multi-member constituencies. Primaries were considered, as was the concept of write-in

candidates, and the John Lewis model where everybody is a candidate was presented as of interest.

In 2030...



We have a fair voting system where voters feel their vote counts

FEELING CONNECTED:

Throughout the consideration of participation and engagement delegates felt that moving decision making closer to the people affected would improve representation and accountability. They suggested that distance from government made people less likely to see the impact of their choices and thus less likely to engage.

Equally, power exercised locally was felt to be easier to understand and challenge, due to improved transparency.

In 2030...

A higher percentage of people are engaged or involved in local community or politics

A REPRESENTATIVE PARLIAMENT:

There were strong feelings that parliament should be more representative of the Scottish people - in terms of Gender, Ethnicity, Age and Disability.

In 2030...

The Scottish Parliament reflects the Scottish population

50:50 gender balance in all our political structures

ENGAGED VOTERS - ONLINE AND OFF:

Delegates often mentioned that new technology could be utilised to facilitate engagement.

At a more traditional level, it was considered that politicians have the responsibility to engage the public and should make more of an effort to go to the people rather than expecting people to come to them.

In 2030...

Citizens are fully engaged in the democratic life of our country through traditional and high tech means

MOVING BEYOND THE PARTY SYSTEM:

A persistent thread of debate was the failure of party politics, a feeling that political parties hinder rather than help the democratic process.

DEMOCRACY MAX

The findings of the People's Gathering

Delegates felt parties were indistinguishable. They were keen that party politics should come second, with partnership politics not party politics being the norm. Some even suggested the abolition of political parties, which demonstrates the extent of their dissatisfaction with and alienation from current party politics. The short term-ism of the election process was considered, and whether this damages the ability of politicians to represent their constituents when so much time is spent on electioneering.

Also raised more than once was the idea that language is institutionalised by political parties, academia and the public sector, and that if we are to understand and hold our politicians to account this needs to be less exclusive.

In 2030...



Party politics comes second – politics is about people

2) DEFENDING OUR DEMOCRACY

HOW DO WE STOP VESTED INTERESTS HAVING TOO MUCH INFLUENCE?



DEMOCRACY MAX

The findings of the People's Gathering

Under this heading the roundtables will be asked to seek to identify and understand the way that institutions and organisations intervene and influence government to enhance their own sets of interests.

The outcome aimed for, having considered the systems and mechanisms that provide balancing power in the interest of the common good, would be suggestions as to how to prevent narrower sets of interests (i.e. the financial lobby, media barons) from harming the more accountable process we have arrived at in the work under the 'Sovereignty of the people theme.

The question of media ownership and useful, informative reporting was raised by a number of delegates. Money being able to buy power and the lack of transparency around lobbying were also of concern. There was a very strong sense that the only way to ensure power is not subverted is for everyone to have access to information and for them to be provided with the knowledge to assess it. This provision of knowledge included; how the system works, how you can engage with the system, information on what decisions are being made, by whom, and how. It was felt that an informed, confident society would be better equipped to hold those with power to account.

VESTED INTERESTS CAN'T BUY THEIR WAY INTO POLITICAL DECISIONS:

The concept that background, upbringing or money should not buy

power in politics, the workplace, government or media was raised in plenary and supported with a loud round of applause.

The distinction between elitism and direct financial benefit was made, suggesting that delegates felt influence was not just about money but can also be about relationships.

With regard to the role of corporate power and money it was felt that there should be less money from business in party politics, with some suggestions that commercial lobbying should be banned outright. Certainly there was strong support that at least secretive corporate influences on government policies and decisions should be outlawed, and organisations who lobby registered. It was suggested that as well as being potentially corrupt, the excessive power given to these vested corporate interests remains an obstacle to meaningful participation.

The increase in private companies making money out of the public sector was noted.

With regard to elitism, there was a discomfort with the privilege of power, perhaps most obviously manifest in the simple request that politicians should follow the rules.

In thinking through how background or money should be prevented from buying power in politics, there was some discussion of alternatives to GDP as a measure of wellbeing, success and happiness. Delegates felt that using GDP as our preferred measure of success skews decision making towards corporations and the wealthy and away from people, so alternative measures are required.

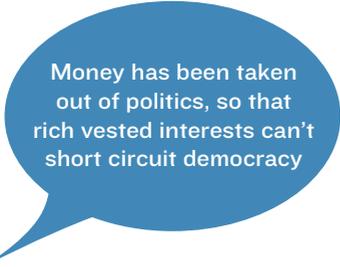
This included a consideration of the role of wealth and greed: statements included “Wealth is now socially acceptable. In previous generations it was socially unacceptable to be ostentatious; now it’s socially unacceptable to be poor” and “The greed is good ethic should be replaced by a deeper sense of the public, greater good.”

There was also a minor discussion on the role of the civil service in decision making and policy development, given they are unelected and unaccountable (other than to the politicians they serve).

DEMOCRACY MAX

The findings of the People's Gathering

In 2030...



Money has been taken out of politics, so that rich vested interests can't short circuit democracy

AN OPEN MEDIA:

Discussion around the media essentially covered three areas: ownership and affiliation; the role of social media and the decline of the traditional press; and perhaps most interestingly, and most vigorously, that the media "should provide actual information".

Measures to ensure a free press were mentioned by many delegates. There was strong support for a plurality of media ownership and for limiting media ownership to a defined percentage. A few delegates proposed a publicly owned but fully independent and democratically controlled media. Others spoke about strengthening public service broadcasting and some suggested that the media

should not be allowed to have political affiliations. It was widely acknowledged that the importance of the press is in decline, and consideration was given to the relationship between social media and mainstream media.

The impression that social media reports what the mainstream media will not was discussed, and some delegates concluded that social media must be embraced, with education adapted accordingly.

Beside these practical considerations, there was considerable attention paid to the content and quality of reporting. Visions for Scotland's democracy in 2030 included a more positive media, where minorities were afforded some level of protection from media abuse. A representative and diverse media, which should create a balanced view was also an ideal.

Delegates felt that the demise of local papers has limited the access of community campaigns to publicise their concerns, and the decreasing diversity of formal media outlets means column inches or screen time are in the hands of the few, rather than being a tool for the

many to communicate and share their concerns.

In 2030...

Secretive corporate influences on government policies and decisions are outlawed

TRANSPARENCY:

Freedom of information was supported, with additional ideas including everyone's tax returns being made publicly available, a centralised data store, and public benefit reporting on all businesses. Other suggestions included making private businesses accountable, requiring public reporting of experiences with local politicians and that every meeting should be recorded, with only minimal exceptions decided by courts.

There was an acknowledgement that people are now more aware of the situation rather than less trusting, but that the manipulation of statistics prevents true

knowledge.

Perhaps reflecting back on the idea that there should be a plurality of media outlets, it was suggested that in order to achieve transparency, multiple channels should be used to communicate.

Ensuring there is a plurality of sites of power and decision making was also raised, with delegates suggesting that it would be less likely that vested interests could win control of power if it was pluralized, rather than being held in a single site. This reflects areas of discussion around localism and the devolution of power.

In 2030...

The media is not relentlessly negative and partisan and instead holds all politicians and power to account



3) HOW DO WE WRITE **THE RULES**

HOW DO WE GET THE CHECKS AND BALANCES OUR DEMOCRACY NEEDS?



DEMOCRACY MAX

The findings of the People's Gathering

Given the results of the previous strands of discussion, under this heading the final phase of roundtables will seek to discuss how to effectively present these ideas and feed them into a wider process of transformation. What sort of process would you need to involve as many people as possible in gaining wider views on and in developing the ideas for a good democracy? Which institutions would be necessary to produce that good democracy and how would they relate to the people? Do we codify such in a written constitution? And, what process should we use to agree on any codification or structures?

The outcome aimed for would be an understanding of what institutions and processes that are necessary to arrive at and maintain a good Scottish democracy, what they look like, and how they relate to each other to ensure 'sovereignty of the people.'

The overwhelming feeling of the People's Gathering was that Scotland's democracy would benefit from a written constitution, although it was stressed that this must be a living document. Equally strongly expressed was a desire for decision making to be moved as close as possible to those affected. This truly local decision making would need to be adequately funded.

Delegates also expressed an interest in introducing some form of citizen led second chamber or national people's forum to debate and scrutinise policy, possibly with the power to block legislation. A variety of models were discussed but the overall direction was towards some form of improved accountability of politicians to the people, and a sense that citizen involvement in politics in this way would improve democracy.

A WRITTEN CONSTITUTION:

A significant number of delegates came to the People's Gathering with a written constitution as an essential aspect of a good Scottish

democracy. Whilst some aspects of such a constitution's content and process of production were agreed, certain areas were more contentious, including whether any constitution should include individual civic responsibilities as well as rights, and how powerful the constitution should be.

The overarching aim of the constitution would be to present a vision for society. It was broadly agreed by delegates that the constitution would define rights and how we are governed, would make clear who makes what decisions, would provide means of holding decision makers to account, would enshrine the separation of powers, and would have the capacity to change as society changes.

As mentioned however, not all delegates agreed that responsibilities should be included in the document. There was some discussion as to whether a complementary Bill of Rights would be appropriate or necessary, partly as a means of codifying access to information. Delegates were determined that any constitution should be developed through a participatory

process representative of all people living in Scotland. They were keen that there should be a commitment to citizen discussion on the constitution and that the process of writing should be democratic. It was also felt that the constitution itself needs to reflect public participation, access, engagement and empowerment.

Enthusiasm for a written constitution was not unanimous. It was asked if there are ways of having a system without a written constitution, with the European Union suggested as an example (although the EU is founded on Treaties which are a similar written document). However it was acknowledged that a constitution in and of itself is not necessarily the solution or the first step, but that the values sought by supporters of a constitution would arise out of the values identified through participatory discussion..

In 2030...

Scotland has a vigorous constitution based on human rights and equality, responsible global citizenship in our world

DEMOCRACY MAX

The findings of the People's Gathering

A PARLIAMENT WITH CHECKS AND BALANCES:

The overwhelming concept to arise in relation to parliamentary structures was that of a second chamber. And there was a strong desire to embrace quite radical reforms around how such a second chamber might be conceived.

Most notably there was strong support for any second chamber being a community chamber. This 'National People's Forum' would be made up of randomly selected citizens who would serve a set term. Various recruitment methods were discussed, ranging from elections to jury selection type methods, to lotteries, perhaps at a constituency level. A further suggestion was that members of the chamber should be recruited from elected town or community councils. This was countered by other delegates wishing the chamber to be non-political. Overall, the idea was that participating in the second chamber would be seen as a form

of service to the community. Some delegates proposed that participants would be paid a stipend for serving, and the idea of 'democratic leave' was also considered as a means of facilitating participation.

The strength of the second chamber was discussed, with some delegates suggesting it should have the power to do more than just scrutinise policy and legislation, perhaps having the ability to vet everything the government do, and to pass or block legislation.

Beyond the concept of a second chamber, some delegates discussed a less formal deliberative process, perhaps an open source plan for achieving an equal Scotland, with an annual open source 3 day weekend open to all. Others talked about monthly 'town hall' style debates open to all, and published. Aligned to this was the suggestion of national long term goals, owned by the people, which would outlast political terms. Overall there was a strong sense that we should be working to bring deliberative democracy techniques into the mainstream.

Delegates also considered the idea of sub parliaments for interest

groups as we have seen with the Carers Parliament. A Scottish civil service was also proposed.

In 2030...

A second chamber is derived from elected town & community councillors who are paid a stipend and sit for set terms

There are citizens' committees in every constituency to strengthen accountability, with the ability to propose legislation and the right to recall

Citizens' juries are part of the legislative process

Each constituency has a lottery for a second chamber with a fixed term of service

REAL LOCALISM:

Perhaps the most consistently expressed desire from delegates

was for more local democracy. For some this was a question of decentralisation versus national unity, of devolution and the role of the Scottish Parliament. For others it was a Swiss vision of a federal Scotland with local areas holding mandatory referendums.

More generally, local involvement was described as more power at the local level, with decision making moved as close as possible to those that are affected. Smaller, more local governance was seen as an ideal, with local decision making seen as the starting point. Some delegates had precise ideas, for instance that the local decision making body should sit a level below the local council, should have a structure, a remit and a budget, and should represent no more than 10,000 people. Others were more open to this being a process rather than a defined end point, suggesting that we should re-assess the levels of government that we have and strengthen that at the local level, as part of an ongoing programme of devolution to areas within Scotland, whether to community councils or to the most appropriate level. This appropriate distribution of power and control would, it was felt, encourage more people to be

DEMOCRACY MAX

The findings of the People's Gathering

involved, and would facilitate the growth in profile and power of community councils and other grassroots organisations. A need to empower the grassroots was expressed, with the suggestion that local participation can come up with creative solutions. The current review of local government was mentioned as an opportunity to ensure an increase in restructuring and improve participatory democracy.

Decentralisation was discussed, with the Swiss system where everything is decentralised until it needs to be federalised held up as an example. This idea of decentralising power and financial control to communities included some reflections that we could redefine local communities in a way which delivered empowerment, giving them their own budget, and seeking to avoid communities being affected by party politics.

Despite this strong interest in local democracy and decentralisation, the benefits of co-operation were not forgotten. Best practice sharing across and between levels of government was proposed, and the possibility

of shared services across council boundaries was raised. And in perhaps the biggest challenge for our current elected members, co-operation between councillors and MSPs was also sought.

In 2030...



We have really 'local' local government

Local Governance that allows people to affect and have sway on local issues

Local decision making will be seen as the starting point, with barriers removed for those who wish to participate

NEXT STEPS



DEMOCRACY MAX

The findings of the People's Gathering

CONCLUSIONS:

The People's Gathering brought together almost a hundred people from across Scotland to discuss our democracy. It was a vibrant, exciting and collaborative day. As is the nature of this kind of deliberative work some of the suggested improvements for our democracy were practical, some were less so, but the participants showed an incredible passion for ideas and for the renewal of our democracy. These ideas do not necessarily represent the views of the Electoral Reform Society, but they do demonstrate the enthusiasm that exists for a better democracy.

Ideas around a free publicly owned press, for instance, maybe impractical, and possibly even contrary to certain democratic principles, but they demonstrate that people feel the problems are not just in our democratic system itself but also in the culture which surrounds it.

It may not be that these are changes that can necessarily be enforced by governments, but

rather they are changes that have to be made by all of us. Governments, decision makers, other bodies, and citizens, working together to create a truly better democracy for Scotland.

We look forward to the discussions and conversations of the roundtables, and to the public events, as we work together to examine the findings of the People's Gathering.

We particularly look forward to feeding back to all the delegates who gave up their time to make this possible.

ABOUT US

Democracy can always be made better.

And with constitutional change high on the agenda, a referendum on independence expected in 2014 and the technology available to really scrutinise those that seek and hold power, this is the right time for Scotland to take stock and consider its democratic future.

Scotland's Democracy has changed a lot since the establishment of our parliament in 1999. There have been strides such as reform of Local Government Elections and there have been ongoing improvements in openness, accessibility and transparency, but we still suffer many of the democratic deficits that affect the rest of the UK.

Over the next year our aim is to set out a vision of the 'Good Scottish Democracy'. Democracy-Max, if you will.

- Electoral
- Reform
- Society

