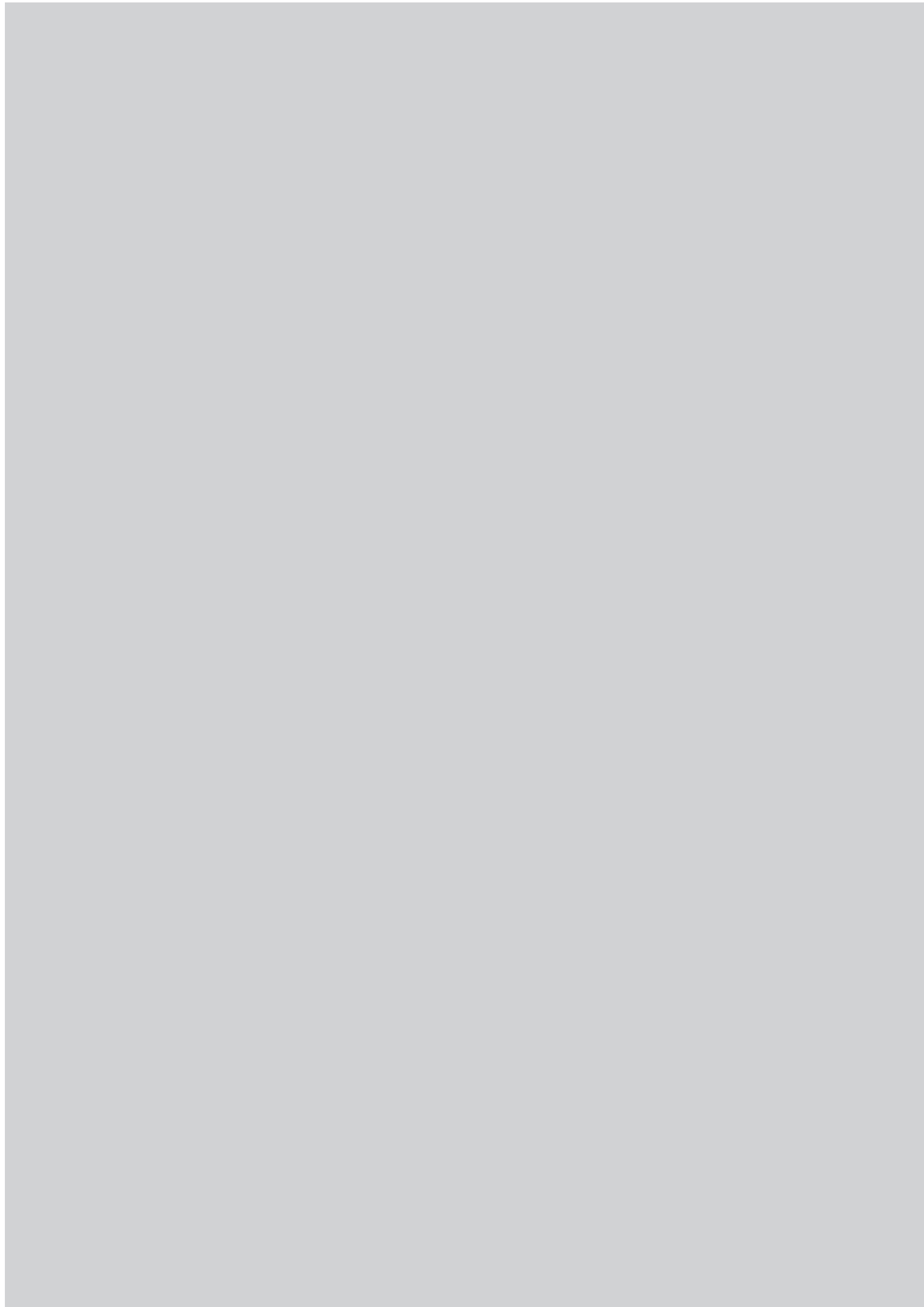

☐ Electoral
☐ Reform
☐ Society

2019 Annual Report

Electoral Reform Society
November 2019



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Introductions



Darren Hughes,
Chief Executive,
Electoral Reform Society.
Photograph Gus Palmer.

The curtain has well and truly been lifted on Westminster's crumbling structures this year. We've played a key role in explaining the driving forces behind Westminster's dysfunction – from the polarisation behind the Brexit stalemate, to the growing disconnect between voters and politicians.

We've defended democratic rights while standing up for reform. That means rejecting First Past the Post in our 'Democracy Denied' report on the 2019 elections, while highlighting the positive alternative shown by Scotland. We've done it through opposing the undemocratic voter ID policy, while calling for a 'registration revolution'.

We've worked collaboratively with other organisations, building coalitions around all of our campaigns. And we're deepening political relationships, working with politicians across the spectrum, from Labour politicians on the Lords, Conservatives on electoral campaign rules, the SNP on citizens' assemblies and the Lib Dems on voter ID. We've seen Conservative voices come out for PR this year – from MPs Amber Rudd and Derek Thomas, to commentators like Hugo Rifkind and Dan Hannan, and seen Labour shift on the issue of Lords reform. All the while, we've been a go-to commentator on all things constitutional.

One thing is clear for all to see. We cannot keep doing the same thing again and again, and expecting different results. This system cannot be made to work. On this, we've got more people than ever agreeing with us. Our challenge is that the 'entry points' for decision-making and achieving change are still very narrow.

At the time of writing, the general election presents a big opportunity to change that. Whether we have a hung parliament or a majority government, it's clear the voting system cannot be made to work in our fragmented and volatile political age.

Amid the anger at politics, there's an appetite for fair representation and change. The way forward is pluralism and cooperation – not the vindictive polarisation of the past. That's why our campaigns not just for fair votes for the Commons but for a PR-elected second chamber and a deeper democracy through citizens' assemblies are so important.

Our Welsh and Scottish offices have been a beacon showing what can be done when power is dispersed, not hoarded. The success of ERS Cymru's campaigning can be seen with not one but two political reform bills, including votes at 16 and modernising electoral processes. In Scotland, the government-backed citizens' assembly – on which we have led the debate as a civil society supporter – again shows what opportunities there are for another way of doing politics.

In all our campaigning – whether in London, Wales or Scotland – we are immensely privileged to have secured our future through our permanent Trust. With a fantastic team, a new council, and, in the new year, a proper home for our Society, we're in an excellent position to fight for real democracy.



Jon Walsh,
Chair,
Electoral Reform Society.
Photograph Anna Gordon.

A year ago, I wrote in our report that debates about ‘democracy’ had dominated the political landscape in 2018. This year has proved to be just as constitutionally chaotic.

The past year has offered many reasons for doubt and despair over the state of our democracy – but the ERS has held the flame for not just defending democracy as it is, but fighting for something better.

The shortcomings of our creaking constitution are clearer than ever. We’ve seen the illegal prorogation of parliament, with parties still locked in the outdated ‘winner-takes-all’ mindset – despite politics changing hugely this past decade.

From highlighting the absurdity of people feeling obliged to vote ‘tactically’, to condemning the government’s dangerous plans for mandatory voter ID, the ERS has stood at the front of calls for a fair and open democracy where everyone’s voice is heard.

We’ve shone a light on the scandal of hereditary peers in the House of Lords and the dangerous loopholes that exist in our current campaigning laws and regulations.

And of course, the ERS has continued to lead the case for electoral reform, through research, lobbying and working with our thousands of members to make the case for change. We are campaigning hard for this to be the last election ever under Westminster’s broken First Past the Post system.

I’ve been proud to chair the Society through this period. I want particularly to thank our departing Council members. They worked tirelessly to secure the ERS’ future and a stable funding base through the ERSL sale, while also guiding vital policy and strategic discussions.

It has been a pleasure to work with you and your commitment to the work of the Society has been inspiring. I look forward to our new Council

members joining and bringing their enthusiasm and passion to the Society for the years ahead.

I also want to thank Darren and the rest of the staff at the Society for putting political reform on the agenda. As we near 2020, I know the need for reform is greater than ever. Thankfully, the Society is more than up to the challenge.

**POLLING
STATION**

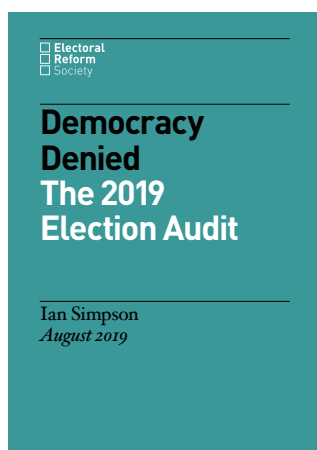
SIGNET SIGNS
BRISTOL

This year has been another tumultuous year in politics, in which the need for a better, fairer, more representative democracy has become ever more apparent. We have used this focus on the state of Westminster democracy to press for systematic change using original research and extensive media coverage to further our campaign aims.

Undermining First Past the Post The 2019 Local Elections

The biggest set of English local elections since 2015 gave us the perfect opportunity to highlight the anomalies created by First Past the Post (FPTP) at local government level. We produced a report *Democracy Denied: The 2019 Election Audit*, which contrasted the democratic options and outcomes for voters in English local elections, under FPTP, with those enjoyed by their Scottish counterparts under the Single Transferable Vote (STV).

The report included in-depth analysis of the results from all 248 local authority elections held in England in May 2019. We partnered with Democracy Club, a non-partisan organisation that is seeking to improve access to quality information on elections. The work of Democracy Club's volunteers meant that it was possible for us to



Democracy Denied: The 2019 Election Audit, Simpson, August 2019

download (and contribute to) a high-quality dataset with the results from every local authority, just two weeks after election day, which enabled us to highlight the outcomes of the election in a timely way.

We presented stark evidence of the failure of FPTP to give many voters in England a proper democratic choice. Around 150 councillors were elected unopposed, without any voting taking place, while a further 150 seats were guaranteed for one party or another due to the lack of competition in multi-member wards. In contrast, since the introduction of STV for Scottish local elections in 2007, there have been only three wards that have had uncontested seats.

In addition, in nearly half of English councils where elections took place, one party was able to win a majority of seats up for election, with fewer than half the votes. This did not happen in any Scottish local authority at the 2017 local elections.

With talk of an imminent general election over the summer, the report provided a timely reminder of the potential for FPTP to deliver random results and constrain voters' choices at the ballot box.

Westminster System Dysfunction

In May this year we released *Westminster Beyond Brexit: Ending the Politics of Division* – a review of Westminster's broken political system and how to reform it. Like the Palace of Westminster itself, the Westminster system appears to be crumbling before our eyes. But as reformers know, this system has not been fit for purpose for a long time. Our report highlighted how the majoritarian culture created by FPTP has hampered parliamentarians' ability to work together. The culture of this oppositional system is not designed for building support and finding areas of agreement – and the Brexit crisis starkly revealed this deficit for all to see. We know from the polling that accompanied



**Westminster Beyond Brexit:
Ending the Politics of
Division, Garland & Palese,
May 2019**

this report that three in five respondents (61%) to our survey felt that the current political system discourages cooperation and compromise between political parties, while roughly the same number (64%) think that our system should be fostering these values. Clearly voters want something better.

By autumn, the cracks that were appearing during the spring had turned into a full-scale flood. The problems we highlighted of executive dominance in the system were brought into the public eye when the Prime Minister prorogued parliament – a decision then overturned by the Supreme Court. As MPs returned to parliament after the Supreme Court decision, we renewed our call for a Constitutional Convention to overhaul this out of date and damaging political system. MPs supported that call with an open letter in the Financial Times.

Whilst politics remains highly charged, we have continued to highlight how it is the system that is letting voters down and used this as a reminder that the form of politics we get is greatly shaped by the structures underpinning it.

House of Lords

2019 has been another bad year for the House of Lords – and a boost for the ERS’ campaign to replace this ‘private members club’ with a proportionally-elected chamber.

As well as launching our ‘Westminster Beyond Brexit’ report which sets out clearly the need for a fairly elected Lords, alongside PR for the Commons, we have drawn attention to the scandal of hereditary peerages in a year that’s seen yet more hereditary peer by-elections. We blew the whistle on attempts to filibuster even minor reform and we continued to highlight the injustice of peers claiming huge expenses, while failing to properly contribute to our democracy.

We have also worked to shine a light on a loophole that lets unelected peers use their titles while failing to even show up, and worked with the Guardian, who directly followed up our 2017 analysis on Lords' expenses with their own analysis – making the front page.

But whilst parties suggest 'taking back control', the majority of our parliament remains in the hands of unelected Lords – something we pointed out in the press throughout the year and in our September briefing on the 'rotten' state of the House of Lords.

Amid calls for 'restraint' in Theresa May's resignation honours, we noted it is absurd to rely on a former PM's own whims when it comes to the make-up of our parliament. Instead, we need a fairly-elected Lords as a stepping stone to a fully PR-elected parliament. Thankfully, from the Conservatives' own benches to commitments for change in the Labour Party, our campaign is only getting stronger.



Branding for Politics for the Many

Politics For the Many

Politics for the Many is a campaign backed by the Electoral Reform Society. The campaign is guided by a steering group of active trade unionists with the objective of helping unions develop policy on constitutional reform. The campaign was established with leading figures from across the labour and trade union movement because the most likely route to constitutional and democratic reform is through a Labour-led government in Westminster – a government in which the trade unions will play a key role in shaping Labour's policies and priorities.

The campaign is shaped by advice from senior people within the labour and trade union movement. The main approach of the campaign is to follow a well-researched and intelligence-led

roadmap to electoral and democratic reform. This is a highly strategic approach that draws upon the limited progress achieved in the past from relying mainly on democratic arguments and an inability to fully map and understand the power relationships and power interest that might both resist and assist us along the road to PR.

The ‘ask’ for Labour and trade unions’ policy is for a rapid reform of the Lords to a senate of the nations and regions elected through PR. This both gives experience of a PR system and contrast in legitimacy to a Commons elected under First Past the Post. This process should be paralleled by a citizen-led constitutional convention whose goal would be to advise that PR should be used for elections to the Commons.

Key activities of the campaign over the past year have been:

- Establishing the steering group which meets quarterly and includes representation from: PCS, Unite, TSSA, CWU, Aslef, and LCER.
- Placing opinion pieces and news in trade union and Labour publications.
- Organising a major conference in Manchester in commemoration of the Peterloo Massacre attended by over 100 people, which included speeches from Jon Trickett MP, the Shadow Minister for the Cabinet Office, and other key people from the Labour Party and movement.
- Influencing lobbying meetings with trade union policy departments.
- Developing relationships with key Labour officials and shadow cabinet members to influence manifesto formation.
- Building online and social media support for the campaign.
- Supporting trade union activists willing to put forward motions to their policy conferences.
- Holding stalls and fringe meetings at trade union and Labour Party Conferences.



This is What Democracy Looks Like: Building a Politics for the Many Conference, Manchester



Voter ID Billboard in Bromley, 2018 Pilots

Opposing Voter ID

The May 2019 local elections in England saw the government once again trial voter ID, after an initial set of pilots in 2018. In ten local authorities, voters were required to present some form of photo or non-photo identification in order to vote. Across the ten councils, almost 2,000 people were turned away for not having the required ID and, of these, over 700 did not return to vote – showing just how dangerous for democracy this policy is.

Building on the work conducted in 2018, we continued to campaign against the introduction of mandatory voter ID throughout the year. We highlighted the disproportionate impact such requirements would have on voters' participation if introduced at the UK level, especially when compared to the extremely rare incidence of personation at the polling station.

After the trials, we responded to the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs select committee's inquiry into electoral law, arguing against the introduction of voter ID, and gave oral evidence to the committee. Following the publication of the Cabinet Office and Electoral Commission's assessments of the pilots, we published our own evaluation of the 2019 trials.

When voter ID was announced in the Queen's Speech, the ERS led the way in campaigning against the policy, with our work being covered by a variety of news outlets and quoted by parliamentarians across the political spectrum. Our petition against voter ID was signed by over 10,000 people in less than a week, and more than 1,000 people joined our mailing list as a result.

We also submitted evidence to the House of Lords Select Committee on the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 on both voter ID and voter registration, arguing that, rather than preventing voters from exercising their

democratic right to vote, we should be working towards a ‘registration revolution’ so that everyone is able to fully participate in our democratic processes.

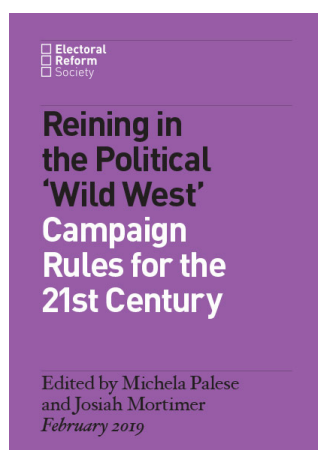
Campaign Regulation

Echoing concerns we have been raising since 2018, in September this year the chair of the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee called for emergency legislation to update electoral law and safeguard democracy.

There has been a growing consensus around the need to act on online campaigning but little action. So at the start of the year we published *Reining in the Political ‘Wild West’: Campaign Rules for the 21st Century* – a collection of pieces by academics, politicians, campaigning groups, think tanks and the regulators (Electoral Commission and Information Commissioner), all highlighting the need to act to protect our democracy. We may differ slightly in our suggested solutions but we are all in agreement on the urgency of the issue.

Spending on digital campaigns has increased significantly. Political parties spent around £1.3 million on Facebook adverts during the 2015 general election. This more than doubled two years later, with parties spending around £3.2 million on Facebook in the 2017 campaign. Yet our election regulations have not kept up with this shift, and online campaigning remains almost entirely unregulated. This creates serious problems for ensuring fairness and transparency in elections.

We have been working with organisations such as Fair Vote and Transparency International to highlight the loopholes in existing electoral law. To take this forward we supported the establishment of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Electoral Campaigning Transparency with Fair Vote and chaired by Stephen Kinnock MP. Over the summer the group took evidence and have now assembled a



Reining in the Political ‘Wild West’: Campaign Rules for the 21st Century, edited by Palese and Mortimer, February 2019

framework for updating our electoral laws in this area. We have taken this campaign to parties and parliamentarians during party conference season with successful events on this issue at Liberal Democrat and Conservative Party conferences. We continue to work cross-party to highlight the need to bring new legislation to parliament.

Citizens' Assembly

The Scottish Government's announcement to hold the Citizens' Assembly of Scotland came at the same SNP conference where we hosted a packed-out fringe event to discuss the merits of such deliberative processes. ERS Scotland has been working on deliberative models of decision-making for almost a decade. So we were delighted by the announcement of the Citizens' Assembly of Scotland, though we also cautioned that the effectiveness of the process would depend on the detail. Fortunately we are in a position to help oversee how it will function, as we are on the expert advisory panel and have been having regular meetings with the politicians and civil servants who have been tasked with developing the Assembly.

At the start of July we convened a roundtable, featuring a wide range of academics, media, civil servants, politicians, and representatives from civil society organisations, which was followed by a public panel featuring the co-chair of the Citizens' Assembly of Scotland. It shows the appetite for new ways of doing democracy in Scotland that we had to move the event to a larger venue after 150 tickets sold out in less than three days! We plan to continue holding events like these throughout Scotland as the Citizens' Assembly begins in earnest.



Shaping Scotland's Citizens' Assembly - Panel Discussion



Local Democracy

Deliberative and local democracy are part of the same future – a vital way to upgrade and return legitimacy to our broken politics. We have had our submission to the Scottish Government’s Democracy Matters consultation worked up into a pamphlet to stimulate ideas for the future of Scottish democracy. Our response draws from working with people across Scotland who are trying out different ways of making decisions, and proposes a genuinely democratic local government for Scotland, shaped from the bottom up.

We are also bringing together a broad network to ensure the bill on local democracy is as ambitious as possible. We are working with MSPs to set up a Cross Party Group on Local Democracy and are also visiting councils across Scotland to build support for our work. To date we have met with six local authorities, two of which are keen to trial some of our ideas on bringing people closer to decision-making.

Collaborative Working and Publications

As always, we try to work as collaboratively as possible. This year we have co-hosted events with the likes of Scottish Fabians and Tory Reform Group, Our Democracy, UNISON, Red Paper Collective. We will also soon be launching a publication detailing the extensive project on which we collaborated with Coalfields Regeneration Trust – Reclaiming Our Coalfield Communities – which saw us lead from the front on the community place-planning processes that we want to see rolled out across Scotland.

However, it is not good enough to try to democratise Scotland project by project: we need a culture shift. There are hopeful signs this is starting to happen.

There has been significant progress this year on electoral reform in Wales. We are seeing legislation going through for the first time, and plans to reform the assembly in terms of its numbers and the electoral system are also developing.

Votes at 16

In early 2019, the National Assembly for Wales introduced the Senedd and Elections (Wales) Bill, which – when passed – will see the extension of the right to vote in Assembly elections to 16 and 17 year olds. We have been working closely with the Assembly on this bill, giving evidence to the committee examining it and meeting with AMs to ensure they back the legislation.

We have also been developing a new project with the Assembly to go into schools to work with young people who will be voting for the first time to increase political education, following on from our ‘Our Voices Heard’ project last year.

In addition, the Welsh Government are introducing a Local Government and Elections (Wales) Bill, which will extend the vote to 16 and 17 year olds in local government elections. We have been working with the Welsh Government as part of a stakeholder group advising on how Votes at 16 is best introduced to young people in Wales.



Some of the young people involved in our votes at 16 work

Voting Systems

As well as extending the vote to 16 and 17 year olds, the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Bill intends to introduce permissive PR, giving councils the choice to move to STV for local elections. This is the first time we have seen legislation on PR in a devolved Wales and, while not the full move to PR we advocate, it is a promising initial step.

There have also been developments at an Assembly level on voting system reform. Following the publication of the Expert Panel on Assembly Electoral Reform's report in 2017, we have been working on a fundamental change to the Assembly; to increase the number of Assembly Members and change the electoral system for Assembly elections to STV.

This July we formed a group of AMs, former AMs and civil society organisations backing an increase in the size of the Assembly and calling for solid commitments to reform in the next manifestos. That same day the Assembly also backed an increase in its size by a majority of 35–15. Since then a new committee has been established looking at how to implement reform ahead of the next elections in 2021. We will be working closely with the committee and other Assembly Members to keep on pushing reform up the agenda.



'Civil society in Wales; Where now? Where next?' event, Cardiff

Members, Supporters and the Wider Public

Our paying membership now sits at approximately 3,200 members. The number of our registered subscribers now stands at 56,400.

Campaigns

This year our supporters remained active in championing our campaigns work. We received over 33,000 new signatures this year on our petition calling for a fairly elected second chamber, and over 10,000 supported our petition to stop the government's dangerous plans to introduce mandatory photographic ID at the polls.

In response to the Supreme Court ruling that parliamentary prorogation was unlawful this year, over 4,000 of our supporters signed our petition calling for a UK-wide constitutional convention.

We have also kept our supporters engaged with our key issues by regularly posting up-to-date comment pieces and articles on our ERS Blog. This is supported by a blog roundup by email, keeping our supporters updated with our work. Over 50,000 of our members and supporters have signed up to receive this regular bulletin.

We have had a good year for campaigns-based fundraising. For our upcoming general election online results tool, our supporters have so far



'Democracy Design'
Competition Winners – Amy
Mulcahy, Gavin Roberts,
David Schley

helped us raise over £4,700. Towards funding our reports, our supporters donated over £2,000 for *Reining in the Political 'Wild West': Campaign Rules for the 21st Century* and over £2,700 for our report *Democracy Denied: The 2019 Election Audit*.

We also continued our fundraising efforts through the Electoral Reform Society online shop. At the end of last year we asked our members and supporters to get involved and create their own 'Democracy Designs', with the winning entry being printed and sold on a mug. We had so many brilliant designs, we ended up choosing three winners. You can now purchase the winning designs on the Electoral Reform Shop.

A huge 'thank you' to all of our members and supporters who have donated to our campaign asks or taken actions on our campaigns.

Lakeman Fellowship

This year, we launched the Lakeman Fellowship and in July were delighted to welcome our first Fellow, Tash Fodil. Funded by our members and supporters, the Lakeman Fellowship gives someone the opportunity to work in politics who may never have done so otherwise – while supporting the work of the Electoral Reform Society at the same time.



**Tash Fodil, Inaugural
Lakeman Fellow**

A message from Tash Fodil, Lakeman Fellow:

After accepting that politics simply wasn't for someone like me, it's hard to overstate how grateful I am to be the ERS' Lakeman Fellow. The position is a unique and very special one, and representative of what the Society is all about: making things fairer and striving towards every voice being heard and valued equally.

Getting to see how such a small team packs such a hefty punch – not least at such an important and chaotic time – has already taught me a great deal. I hope that I can offer something, too, and further challenge the notion that

change should only be shaped by certain people.

It feels important that the Fellowship continues to have a future and broaden the conversation. A heartfelt 'thank you' also to those who have pledged their support, without which it wouldn't exist.

Party Conferences

This autumn we held events at all major political party conferences to engage with MPs, academics, journalists and party members and to promote the ERS' many campaigns.

We attended the Liberal Democrats Conference to discuss campaign regulations in collaboration with the Social Liberal Forum and Wera Hobhouse MP.

At Labour Party Conference, the ERS held a taster session of a Citizens' Assembly at The World Transformed that included Irish Assembly Member Louise Caldwell, Jon Trickett MP and David Martin Co-Convenor of the Scottish Citizens' Assembly. We also held a Politics for the Many event at Labour Conference with Jon Trickett MP and Christine Berry to discuss reforming the House of Lords. Moreover, in collaboration with The Fabian Society the ERS facilitated a fringe event to discuss the importance of improving the Westminster system with Lisa Nandy MP and the Mayor of Newham, Rokhsana Fiaz.

At Conservative Party Conference we held an event to discuss the importance of campaign regulations in partnership with Bright Blue, including Damian Collins MP and Hugo Rifkind. We have received positive feedback from speakers and audience members from all conference events.

ERS in the Press: 2019

2019 has seen a surge in press attention on Westminster's broken system – in part spurred on by the deadlock in parliament.

As the figures below show, we've seen a rise in

Media Hits

The Electoral Reform Society received nearly 1,700 pieces of coverage in the media from January to late October 2019.

In 2018, the figure was around 1,900, bolstered through our extremely high level of coverage surrounding the centenary of women's suffrage.

Approximate print/online media hits per campaign/issue referenced (% of total):

- Voting Systems/PR – 43%
- Voter ID – 35%
- Voter Registration – 33%
- Diversity (inc. mentions of BME & women's representation) – 33%
- Brexit – 25%
- House of Lords – 22%
- Campaign Regulation – 4%
- Votes at 16 – 1%

(Please note, some pieces of coverage relate to multiple topics – therefore, the figures amount to more than 100%)

coverage of electoral reform, with our messages relentlessly highlighting the problems and solutions to the UK's centralised political set-up.

Our analysis of this year's local elections drew attention to the hundreds of uncontested seats and 'two party stitch-ups'. We hit out at 'democracy deserts', while our report on the failure of First Past the Post in 2019's English local elections went far and wide.

We published regular polling showing the downsides of First Past the Post – from tactical voting to anti-choice pacts – stories which took us beyond the 'usual suspects' to the red-top tabloids.

As well as setting the agenda with proactive work, we led the response to attacks on democratic rights. When announced in the Queen's Speech, we challenged voter ID as the wrong priority for our democracy, with our work frequently cited in comment pieces and stories. We set the narrative over this 'show your papers' policy, with interviews across broadcast outlets and several mentions in parliament.

Throughout the year we affirmed our role as a leading voice in the campaign for updating our election laws, whether through our 'Reining in the Wild West' report (featured in the Sunday Times), or regular briefings such as our campaigns 'loophole list' through BuzzFeed. With this, we have helped change the debate with warnings over 'dark ads, dodgy donations and disinformation.

Our commentary on the House of Lords has continued to pitch the Lords as a 'private members' club' that must be replaced with a PR-elected chamber. Once again, we have been the go-to spokespeople on the need to reform the second chamber, with Darren Hughes slating the unelected Lords on Channel 4 and close work with outlets from the Guardian to the Daily Mail.

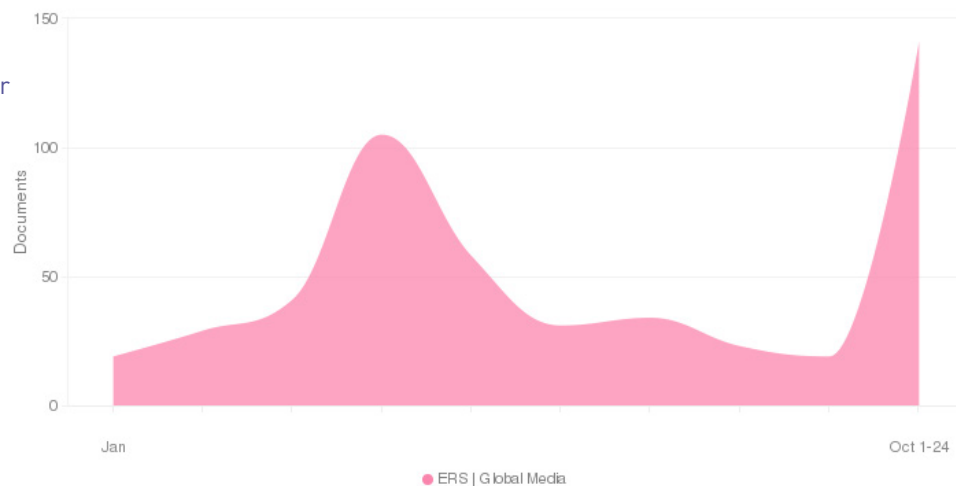
In Scotland, we set the agenda on Citizens' Assembly, adding vital nuance to a polarised debate,

while in Wales we've been the go-to commentators on Assembly and local government reform.

Prior to the announcement of the general election, we sounded the alarm about the crisis of under-registration in the UK – with up to 9.4m people missing from the electoral roll. Our promotion of these Electoral Commission figures has led to calls for reform of the system.

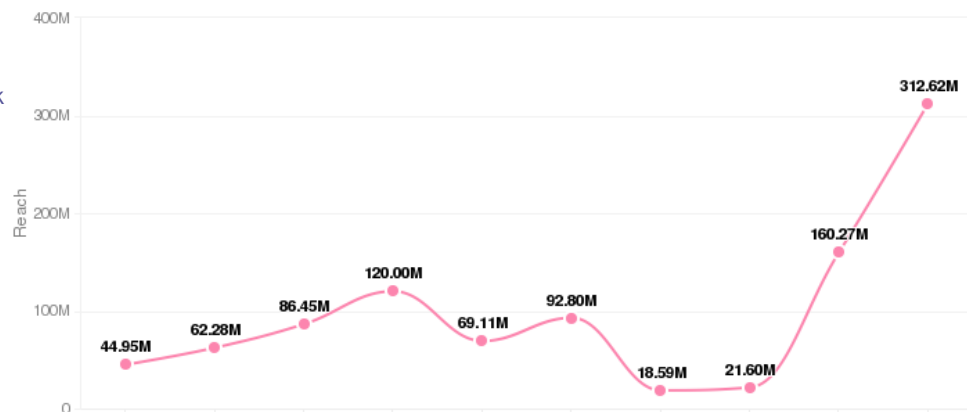
Global media exposure

Note significant surges during local elections. Voter ID work in October significantly increased our coverage for the year.

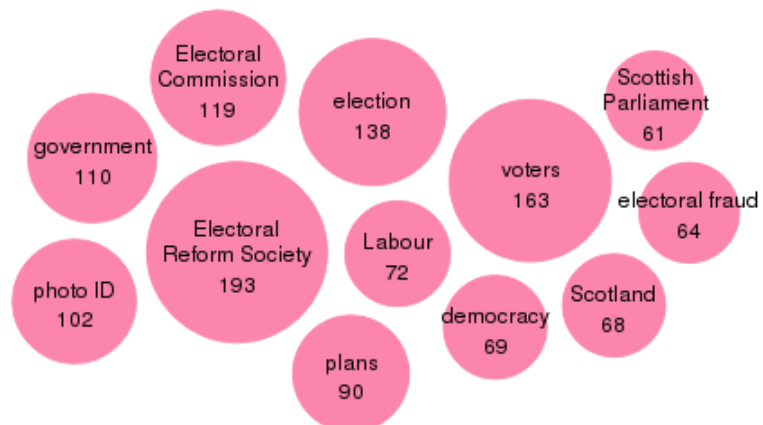


Potential Reach

Larger publications covered our voter ID work – hence the enormous potential reach (measured by coverage outlets' collective total reach).



Key Themes for ERS Coverage



Social Media

Our Facebook audience now stands at 42,500. An ERS blog written by Caroline Lucas on the importance of a fairer voting system reached over 42,000 people on Facebook.

Our Twitter feed is followed by 38,600. Topics that gave our tweets the best responses were around the disproportionate results of the local elections in England and the government's voter ID policy. Our tweet showing how results can change under First Past the Post when boundaries change, reached just under 140,000 people and was retweeted over 1,000 times.



Darren Hughes,
Chief Executive

The Society's staff are based in our offices in London, Edinburgh and Cardiff.

We were pleased to welcome several new team members this year. Ian Simpson, Research Officer, and Jon Narcross, Communications Officer, joined us in March. Natasha Fox, Public Affairs and Campaigns Officer, joined us in April. In July this year, we welcomed our inaugural Lakeman Fellow, Tash Fodil, to the team. Thanks to all current staff for their hard work and dedication.

Thanks also to Rob Cox, Communications Assistant, who left us at the end of 2018 after a year at the Society.

Current staff

Chief Executive

Darren Hughes

Campaigns, Research and Policy

Willie Sullivan,
Senior Director
(Scotland, Campaigns)

Jess Garland,
Director of Research
and Policy

Josiah Mortimer,
Head of Communications

Michela Palese,
Research and Policy
Officer

Ian Simpson
Research Officer

Natasha Fox
Public Affairs and
Campaigns Officer

Doug Cowan,
Digital Officer

Jon Narcross
Communications Officer

Lizzie Lawless
Acting Membership
Officer (Maternity Cover)

Tash Fodil
Lakeman Fellow

Operations

Kate West,
Chief Operating Officer
(On Maternity Leave
until June 2020)

Stuart Thomas,
Acting Chief Operating
Officer (Maternity Cover)

Daniel Anderson,
Finance Officer (part time)

ERS Scotland

Phil Connor,
Campaigns Officer
(part time)

Alice Kinghorn-Gray,
Campaigns Organiser
(part time)

Jonathon Shafi,
Campaigns Organiser
(part time)

ERS Cymru

Jess Blair,
Director

Matthew Mathias,
Campaigns and
Projects Officer

The Council

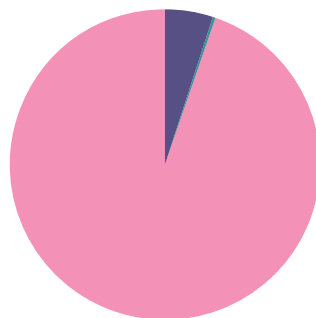
The Council is the Electoral Reform Society's governing body. It is made up of 15 members who are elected by our membership every other year and serve for a two-year term. Elections took place in 2017. Following governance changes approved by members at the 2017 AGM to change the structure of Council to 12 elected and 3 co-opted vacancies, a new Council of 12 elected members will take office after the AGM on 30th November 2019.

Between 1 December 2018 and 30 November 2019, the following members served on the Society's Council:

- Jon Walsh, Chair
- Justina Cruickshank, Vice Chair (Management)
- Ruth Kelly, Deputy Chair (Campaigns and Research)
- Andrea Marcelli (Treasurer)
- Philip Cole
- Abigail Emery
- Victor Chamberlain
- Lisa French
- Kerri Prince
- Chris Finlayson
- Andrew Copson
- Ken Ritchie
- Keith Sharp
- Joe Sousek
- Owen Winter

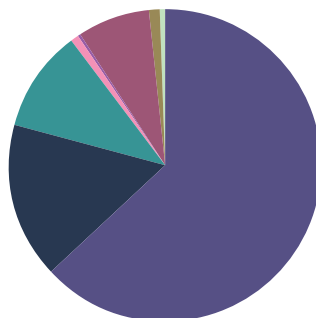
Finance

Income (2018)
£45.7m



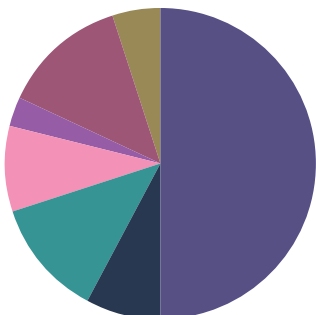
- Profit on Sale of Investments 94.7%
- Members and supporters 0.3%
- Other income (eg interest) 0.1%
- Dividend 5.0%

Expenditure (2018)
£1.4m



- Depreciation 0.4%
- Sundry expenses 1.2%
- Legal, accountancy and professional fees 7.4%
- Recruitment 0.2%
- Staff training and development 1.0%
- Premises, office costs, IT and utilities 10.5%
- Campaigns, research and conferences 16.2%
- Salaries incl. N.I. and pension 63.0%

Campaigns, research and
conferences breakdown
(2018)
£228,124



- Northern Ireland 0.1%
- Wales Campaigns 5.0%
- Scotland Campaigns 13.0%
- Funded Projects 3.0%
- Party Conferences 9.0%
- Events, membership and supporters 12.0%
- External Communications 8.0%
- Campaigns and Research 50.0%

Diversifying our Income

Early in 2018, we were presented with an opportunity to further diversify our investments. Following a long period of careful consideration and negotiation, the Council agreed that it would be in the Society's best interests to sell its shares in Electoral Reform Services Limited, which was started as a balloting services company by the Society. In November 2018 we received a total of £45 million for the Society's shares and secured what the Council believes is a truly momentous and prosperous deal for the Society.

Our New, Permanent Home

On 20 July 2016 we used the proceeds from the sale of our building in Chancel Street, Southwark, London to purchase a new building in Borough, near London Bridge, just off the highly desirable Bermondsey Street in SE1.

Work began on the new five-storey building in November 2018, with a proposed completion date for the Society to move into its new permanent home in January 2020. The ERS will occupy the first floor of the building and sublet the rest of the space as part of our strategy to diversify our future income sources.



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