

Electoral Reform Society

2021-2024 Strategy Summary

Background

The Electoral Reform Society is the UK's leading voice for democratic reform. We operate on a simple premise – that politics can be better than it is.

We work with everyone – from political parties, civil society groups and academics to our own members and supporters and the wider public – to campaign for a better democracy in the UK.

Our vision is of a democracy fit for the 21st century, where every voice is heard, every vote is valued equally, and every citizen is empowered to take part. We make the case for lasting political reforms, we seek to embed democracy into the heart of public debate, and we foster the democratic spaces which encourage active citizenship.

The ERS is ambitious about far-reaching changes to the way politics works, working across our three offices in London, Cardiff and Edinburgh to build a better democracy.

Our Goals

- To have public authorities in the UK elected by proportional representation and specifically by the Single Transferable Vote in multi-member constituencies.
- That the democratic institutions of the UK, its nations and regions and other constituent parts work in ways that lead to citizens having high levels of trust in them.

Our Culture

In all of our work, the ERS seeks to be:

- Honest – We aim to build relationships based on trust, to learn from our successes and mistakes, and to operate with integrity.
- Responsible – We aim to ensure all of our work is rooted in evidence and firm foundations.
- Broadminded – We will work across the spectrum to help build a better democracy in the UK, building coalitions, being innovative, and listening to others. The ERS is part of a proud movement for political equality.

In addition to these we have a set of values expressed in a way that relates them to the wider world and society and are the guiding principle for our goals. They are Equality, Social Justice and Freedom.

The ERS' 2021-2024 Strategy

The ERS has been pivotal in working to expand democracy across the UK – from successfully campaigning for councils to be able to use the Single Transferable Vote in Wales, to playing a key part in the push for citizens' assemblies in Scotland and across England, to introducing 'virtual parliament' proceedings when the pandemic struck.

Our strategy builds on this – while recognising the risk of 'democratic backsliding', and the need to stand up to protect and expand our existing political freedoms.

Right now, disillusionment, disengagement, and distrust are the words most often associated with people's relationship to representative politics. The ERS understands that this is enabled by a voting system which hands one party undue power. Westminster's centralised system is holding this country back.

The ERS is working to build coalitions to change this, and reform politics at every level. The ERS will work to increase the salience of vital political reforms – to raise them up the agenda by linking them to the issues people face in their daily lives.

We push for cross-party agreements on proportional representation and wider reform, working within and outside of parties.

Our route to reform – 2021-2024

- Build an effective network of groups and organisations, including political parties, who are supportive of democratic reform.
- Persuade one of the two major parties to back proportional representation. This is most likely to be the Labour party, but we will continue to work with Conservatives.
- Increase the salience of our policies for political reform among influential groups of voters – in other words, to make proportional representation and democracy a vote-winner.
- Push democratic institutions to change and innovate to increase long term citizen support and trust. We aim to increase the use of Citizens' Assemblies, secure cross-party agreement on Lords reform, and build consensus around principles for devolution across the UK.

The ERS has a significant media profile as a respected and long-standing organisation which produces high-quality commentary, research and materials. We are accountable to our members, elected council and the wider democracy movement.