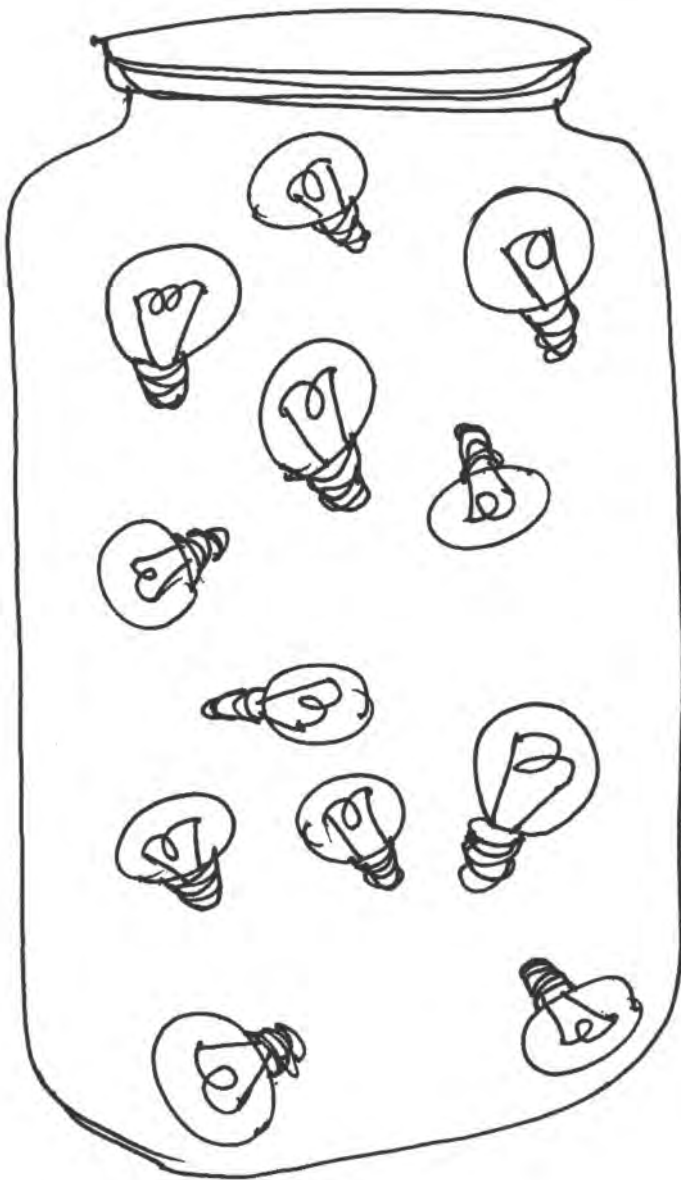


Power2010 Deliberative Poll Guide to Reforms



Background

“Our democracy is in crisis. MPs fiddle while the planet burns. Our rights and freedoms are under attack. Bankers blow billions and the taxpayer foots the bill. We can't go on like this. We need a healthy democracy that works for all of us and not just a powerful few. POWER2010 exists to help create it. It gives everyone the chance to have a say on how our democracy works so that together we can change it for the better.”

This document

This document is intended for all of those who have agreed to participate in the POWER2010 deliberative poll on 9th – 10th January 2010 at the Park Plaza Riverbank, 18 Albert Embankment, London, SE1 7TJ.

It provides information about the POWER2010 campaign and what it aims to achieve; information on the purpose of the deliberative poll and what you can expect from the weekend; and a set of discussion materials on the issues and ideas on which public opinion is being sought.

POWER2010

What is POWER2010?

POWER2010 is a unique campaign to give everyone the chance to have a say in how our democracy works for us.

Since mid-September 2009 POWER2010 has been seeking ideas from members of the public on how politics in the UK should change. This generated a fantastic response, with over 4,000 submissions in total. With help from academics at the University of Southampton, these have been reduced to a core list of 58 ideas representing the breadth and variety of the submissions as a whole. Public opinion is now being sought on these ideas through the *Deliberative Poll* in which you have agreed to participate.

The deliberative poll will produce a shortlist to be put to the public vote, with the five most popular ideas from that vote becoming the *POWER2010 Pledge*. At the next *election* we will work with volunteers and activists to ensure every candidate commits to support the POWER2010 pledge as part of a nationwide campaign to reinvigorate our *democracy* from the bottom up. That way we will ensure the next *Parliament* delivers the reform our system so desperately needs.

Why now?

We were all outraged over MP's expenses. But this scandal was only a symptom of a much bigger problem. Simply cleaning up the expenses system and sacrificing a few token offenders is not enough to fix our broken politics.

The serious challenges we face today, from financial breakdown to unemployment and climate change, can only be tackled with a healthy democracy that works for all of us, not just for a powerful few.

But it is already too late for our current set of MP's. They lack the time and the will to make the kind of changes that are needed. With only months until the next General Election we must now focus all our efforts on ensuring that the new Parliament is one of reform. POWER2010 is designed to do just that.

Who are we?

"POWER2010 is funded by the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust and the Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust, and supported by a wide range of individuals and organisations. POWER2010 has its roots in the Power Inquiry, which was established by the Rowntree Trusts in 2005 and undertook the biggest ever inquiry into the health of Britain's democracy."

What we are doing?

The campaign has four phases.

1. Tell us your ideas

In the first phase of the campaign we asked for the public's ideas - the democratic and political reforms people would most like to see from the next Parliament. This phase closed at midnight on Thursday 30th November with over 4,000 submissions received from people across the UK.

2. Deliberative Poll

This is the phase of the campaign in which you have agreed to participate. On the weekend of 9 – 10 January 2010, up to 200 citizens selected at random from across the UK and representative of the population as a whole will gather in London for a two-day deliberative event.

These 200 citizens will participate in a Deliberative Poll being organised by Professor James Fishkin, Alice Siu and Bob Luskin of Stanford University. Professor Fishkin conceived this method of public consultation in the 1980s and has carried out numerous Deliberative Polls around the world.

Participants will receive balanced briefing materials, deliberate in small group discussions with trained moderators and engage in plenary sessions with experts. Participants' opinions are then gathered through confidential questionnaires before and after deliberations. In this way, these 200 citizens will distil the many ideas we have received into a manageable shortlist of proposals.

3. The public vote

The shortlist produced by the deliberative poll will be put to a public vote, beginning on 18th January 2010 and lasting five weeks until 22th February. During this time the campaign will be working with individuals and organisations across the country to meet up, discuss, and vote, ensuring as many people as possible participate and tell us the reforms they most want to see.

The five most popular ideas following the vote will become the POWER2010 Pledge and the focus for our nationwide campaign at the next election.

4. Election campaign

The aim is for as many people as possible to sign the POWER 2010 Pledge of reforms and then take it to the candidates in their *constituency*, by writing to them or calling them, as well as attending local hustings, public meetings and MPs' surgeries.

Every candidate standing at the next election will be asked to make a public commitment - a pledge to clean up and reform politics based on the people's priorities. In this way we will ensure that the next Parliament is a reforming one and delivers the changes our democracy so desperately needs.

Who else is involved?

The Deliberative Poll is being organised by James Fishkin and his colleagues Alice Siu and Bob Luskin. James Fishkin is Professor of Communication and Professor of Political Science, at Stanford University in the United States.

Professor Fishkin is well known for developing his unique method of Deliberative Polling®, a practice of public consultation that employs random samples of the citizenry to explore how opinions would change if they were more informed.

Professor Fishkin and his collaborators have conducted Deliberative Polls in the US, Britain, Australia, Denmark, Bulgaria, China, Greece and other countries.

What to expect from the event

Aims

The aim of the Deliberative Poll is to discover the views of the general public on different proposals to reform British democracy by engaging a representative sample of the population in debate and discussion. The proposals which have the most support amongst participants will then be put to the public vote in mid-January.

We want to achieve a clear and authentic picture of what the public thinks about our democracy and how they think it should change. The five ideas which attract the most public support during the voting stage will become the POWER2010 pledge and the focus for a nationwide campaign for democratic renewal at the next election.

What you will be asked to do

At the start of the event you will be asked to complete a questionnaire saying how strongly you support particular proposals for reforming British democracy. You will then gather with the rest of the participants to discuss the issues. The briefing materials in this guide provide the stimulus for discussion. In the guide you will find a description of each of the reform proposals alongside arguments for and against.

During the event you and the other participants will take part in small group discussions with trained moderators and engage in dialogue with competing experts based on the questions developed in these small group discussions. After the deliberations, you will be asked to repeat the questionnaire. The resulting changes in opinion represent the conclusions the public would reach if they had the opportunity to become more informed and more engaged by the issues.

Other ways to contribute

There are many ways to get involved in the POWER2010 campaign if you would like to help the cause of democratic renewal in Britain. Find out more at www.power2010.org.uk or find us on Twitter and Facebook.

Further information

Contact Power2010

We can be contacted at:

POWER2010

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London SE1 7SJ

Tel: 020 7806 6239

Email: office@power2010.org.uk

Other sources

The Centre for Deliberative Democracy <http://cdd.stanford.edu/>

The current situation

The UK Government

In the British political system authority theoretically lies with the monarch but is carried out by ministers of the Crown, who are all members of one or other of the *Houses of Parliament*. Collectively ministers form the Government.

The Government is responsible to Parliament for actions carried out in the Crown's name. It is led by the *Prime Minister*, who is appointed by the Queen as the *Member of Parliament (MP)* most likely to command a majority of MPs in the *House of Commons*.

The Prime Minister selects the members of the Government and the Queen confirms their appointment. As the Government is drawn from Parliament the two are said to be 'fused'. This means that, along with the rest of Parliament, the Government must seek re-election at least every five years.

The current Prime Minister is Gordon Brown, leader of the Labour Party. He was appointed by Queen Elizabeth II on 27 June 2007. He leads a Government composed of 127 ministers, mostly Labour Party MPs.

How parliament works

The UK Parliament is the supreme law-making (or 'legislative') body of the United Kingdom. Parliament consists of an 'upper house', the *House of Lords*, and a 'lower house', the House of Commons.

In theory, the supreme power is said to lie with the Sovereign (or the 'Queen-in-Parliament'). In practice, real power is vested in the House of Commons, as the Sovereign generally acts on the advice of the Prime Minister, and the powers of the House of Lords have been limited.

The House of Commons

The House of Commons is a democratically elected chamber. Elections to the House are held at least every 5 years. There are 646 MPs in total in the Commons, which will increase to 650 at the next *General Election*. Each MP represents the residents of a constituency in the UK with an average population size of roughly 68,000. They are paid a basic salary of £64,766, with higher salaries for those who become ministers.

The majority of an MP's duties involve working on behalf of constituents, examining and debating legislation. Many MPs serve on select committees, where detailed scrutiny of Government policy is carried out. The House typically sits from Monday to Thursday in term time, with Fridays usually reserved for constituency business.

The role of the Commons is to debate policy, revising and scrutinising legislation introduced by the Government. The Prime Minister is drawn from the House of Commons and Government ministers are drawn from the Commons and occasionally the Lords. All *bills* must go through both Houses before they become '*acts*' (laws).

The House of Lords

The House of Lords is primarily selected rather than elected. Of the 706 members in the House of Lords, 588 are life peers (nominated by the *political parties* and appointed by the Crown under the advice of the Prime Minister), 92 are *hereditary peers* and 26 are bishops.

The House of Lords is subordinate to the House of Commons. Its role is to scrutinise, revise and, if necessary, delay laws proposed by MPs in the Commons. Under normal circumstances the agreement of the House of Lords is needed for all laws, but in exceptional circumstances the Commons can use the *Parliament Acts* to pass legislation without the Lords agreement, subject to certain delays.

Devolved Government

Since 1998 the power of decision-making on certain policy areas has been delegated (or '*devolved*') to democratically elected Governments in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The *Scottish Parliament* and the *Welsh Assembly* were created following *referendums*.

Scotland

The Scottish Parliament has law-making powers over areas including education, health, agriculture and justice. All foreign policy matters and some domestic matters, including the economy and taxation, remain with the *UK Parliament* in Westminster.

Wales

The Welsh Assembly does not have equivalent law-making powers but does have the right to *legislate* in some areas if it receives the permission of the Secretary of State for Wales and the UK Parliament. It also has the power to vary laws passed by Westminster using *secondary legislation*.

Northern Ireland

The situation in Northern Ireland is unique: devolved arrangements are based on an international treaty between Great Britain and Ireland, the Good Friday Agreement 1998, which helped bring an end to decades of troubles. The *Northern Ireland Assembly* has authority to legislate in areas known as 'transferred matters', such as education, health and agriculture. Powers retained by Westminster are divided into 'excepted matters' which it retains indefinitely (such as immigration and international relations), and 'reserved matters' (such as policing and criminal law), which may be transferred to the Northern Ireland Assembly at a future date.

England

England has no Parliament of its own and is ruled by the UK Parliament in Westminster.

Europe

The *European Union (EU)* is an organisation of 27 member states committed to economic and political co-operation. It was established by the Treaty of Maastricht in 1993 upon the foundations of the European Economic Community, which was itself set up by six European states following World War Two to help economic recovery and promote peace.

In the future the EU is likely to continue to expand, primarily on the fringes of Eastern and Central Europe, as a number of countries have expressed an interest in joining.

The EU has a single market enforced through a standard system of laws which apply in all member states, ensuring the free movement of goods, services, people and capital. It maintains common policies on trade, fisheries, and regional development and has a limited role in foreign policy and in justice and home affairs. Sixteen member states have adopted a single currency, the Euro. This zone of 16 is known as the *Eurozone*.

In certain areas decisions are made through negotiations between member states, while in others independent EU institutions have responsibility.

There are five principal institutions in the EU:

The **European Commission** is responsible for proposing legislation, enforcing law, implementing decisions, and the day-to-day running of the EU. It comprises 27 commissioners selected by member states. It is appointed once every five years and is politically answerable to the European Parliament.

The **Council of the European Union** is the principal decision-making body of the EU. It comprises two levels:

- The European Council, which is made up of the heads of state or Government of the member states, meets every six months to set out the policy direction of the EU.
- The Council of Ministers, which is composed of national ministers from member states with a rotating six month presidency - it may initiate new EU law in the specific policy areas member states have delegated to it.
- The European Parliament is directly elected by European citizens every five years. It has legislative and veto authority in some specific areas. Its powers have been gradually expanding since it was established in 1979.
- The European Court of Justice acts to ensure all EU law is applied consistently in each member state. It is composed of one judge from each member state.
- The European Central Bank has responsibility for the monetary policy of the Euro-zone.

Britain joined the European Economic Community in 1973. In 1975 a nationwide referendum was held in which a majority voted for the UK to remain a member. Since that time several EU treaties have expanded the power of EU institutions and brought closer integration between member states, most recently the Treaty of Lisbon which came into force December 2000.

The need for change

The public has been switching off from formal politics in this country for some time. Polls consistently show a majority dissatisfied with the way democracy works in the UK and in favour of change. The expenses scandal which engulfed Westminster in the spring of 2009 simply strengthened this feeling. The public anger at MPs was always about more than simply duck houses, moats, dry rot, and bell towers: it is symptomatic of a much deeper disconnect between the public and politicians that has been building for years.

Voter turnout at the last two General Elections in 2001 and 2005 was at a historic low of around 60%. The Power Inquiry, which carried out the largest ever investigation into people's attitudes to British democracy several years ago, concluded that this disengagement doesn't arise from apathy or satisfaction with the status quo. Instead, disengagement arises from feelings of powerlessness and a sense that the political system is too remote and unresponsive to people's needs and interests.


If this is to change then power needs to be taken from the few who wield it in the centre and put it in the hands of ordinary people. This means making Government more accountable to Parliament, and Parliament more accountable to the people. It means ensuring politics is open, transparent and free from sleaze or corruption.

Driving reform

The parties cannot be relied on to deliver change on their own. That is why POWER2010 exists: so that we can organise together, demand changes to our democracy and hold politicians to account. By drawing up a programme for reform from the bottom up that has public support, POWER2010 will make the demand for a new politics impossible for politicians to resist.

What follows are the 58 ideas for reform which you will be asked to consider, respond to and discuss. Please take a moment to read through these ideas ahead of the deliberative poll.

This Document

- This symbol  denotes the approximate number of people who suggested the idea
- Text in '*italics*' and quotation is taken from the original ideas submission
- A glossary of terms is available at the end of this document.

Ideas (1/2)



Chapter one: Elections and Voting

Voting systems

1. Introduce a more proportional voting system for elections
2. Introduce the Alternative Vote for General Elections

Increasing participation

3. Make voting compulsory
4. Allow people to cast their votes online, by telephone, by text message or by television.
5. Hold elections on the weekend to make it easier to vote
6. Offer 'none of the above' as an option on all ballot papers
7. Add policy area scores to ballots
8. Lower the minimum voting age to 16
9. Extend voting rights to convicted criminals

General

10. Give the public the right to initiate referendums
11. Remove the need for a deposit for General Election candidates
12. Give local people the right to 'recall their MP and hold fresh constituency elections
13. Redraw constituency boundaries to equalise the population of constituencies
14. Elect a proportion of MPs each year



Chapter two: Parliament

MPs and the House of Commons

15. Introduce fixed term parliaments
16. Increase the number of issues to be decided by free votes.
17. Give Parliament the power to set its own timetable
18. Reduce or eliminate the use of Statutory Instruments by Government
19. Define MPs pay, conditions and job specification through a public process
20. Ban retiring MPs from private sector jobs associated with their parliamentary business
21. Strengthen Select Committees

House of Lords

22. Introduce A fully elected House of Lords
23. Abolish the House of Lords entirely
24. Select the Upper Chamber by lot from the population.
25. Ban members of the House of Lords from becoming Government ministers
26. Create an Upper Chamber that represents different sections of society
27. Remove or limit the power of Prime Ministerial patronage and prevent the appointment of MPs to the House of Lords

General

28. Move Parliament to a location near the geographical centre of the UK
29. Abolish the Royal Prerogative powers and place them on a statutory basis
30. Abolish the Monarchy and introduce an elected Head of State
31. Allow the public to elect senior Judges
32. Directly elect the prime minister



Ideas (2/2)



Chapter three: Political Parties

Reforms suggested

- 33. Full disclosure of political and civil service communications with lobbyists
- 34. Cap the amount political parties can receive from individuals (or total amount)
- 35. Increase the amount of public funding available for parties and candidates
- 36. Expand the use of open primaries to select party candidates.
- 37. Make party manifesto promises legally binding
- 38. All parties must be democratic
- 39. Incentivise parties to better reflect the gender and ethnic makeup of the population



Chapter four: Europe

Reforms suggested

- 40. Hold a referendum on Britains membership of the European Union
- 41. Hold a referendum on introducing the Euro

Chapter five: Devolution and Local Govt

Devolution

- 42. Hold separate referendums on membership of the Union in England, Scotland and Wales
- 43. Forbid Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish MPs voting on issues only affecting England and Scottish and Northern Irish MPs on matters affecting only England and Wales
- 44. Hold a referendum on establishing an English Parliament
- 45. Hold a referendum on the strongest form of devolution amongst the nations
- 46. Move to a region based federal system of Government



Local Government

- 47. Introduce directly elected mayors into population centres
- 48. Increase the decision making and taxation powers of local councils
- 49. Increase the salaries of local councillors
- 50. Select some councillors by lot from the local population
- 51. Allow local people to elect the heads of key services, such as the police.
- 52. Commit to a duty of meaningful public consultation through a deliberative process



Chapter six: Rights and Freedoms

- 53. Create a written constitution
- 54. Introduce a strong and broad Bill of Rights through a meaningful public consultation
- 55. Expand the scope of the Freedom of Information Act
- 56. Scrap the National ID scheme and roll back the database state
- 57. Restrict CCTV and other forms of intrusive surveillance
- 58. Introduce compulsory politics lessons into school



Chapter 1

Elections and Voting

Voting is how the people exercise power in a democracy. Questions over who can vote, what matters they vote on, and how and when they do it are at the heart of the debate over the kind of politics we want to have.

Several of the reforms proposed deal with the different methods available for how we choose our politicians – commonly known as electoral systems. Each system produces different results and has its own advantages and disadvantages from a democratic point of view.

Also contained within this category are reforms that would extend the right to vote to groups within society that, for various different reasons, currently do not possess it.

There are also reforms that would expand the democratic power of voters beyond the act of selecting representatives at election time to having a direct say on the political issues that affect their lives. The category also features reforms aimed at increasing participation in politics either by making voting compulsory or by making it easier and more convenient.

Voting systems

1. Introduce a more proportional voting system for elections
2. Introduce the Alternative Vote for General Elections

Increasing participation

3. Make voting compulsory
4. Allow people to cast their votes online, by telephone, by text message or by television.
5. Hold elections on the weekend to make it easier to vote
6. Offer 'none of the above' as an option on all ballot papers
7. Add policy area scores to ballots
8. Lower the minimum voting age to 16
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General

10. Give the public the right to initiate referendums
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13. Redraw constituency boundaries to equalise the population of constituencies
14. Elect a proportion of MPs each year



1. Introduce a more proportional voting system for elections

(280) 

Currently General Elections are held under the *First-Past-the-Post (FPTP)* electoral system. The country is divided into constituencies in which each voter casts one vote for one of the candidates running for election in their constituency. The candidate with the most votes wins.

"Because its fairer, its more democratic, it will eliminate "safe" seats and will foster cooperation not confrontation"

Under FPTP the number of seats won by a party in parliament, and thereby its power, is only very indirectly linked to the proportion of all the votes won by that party in an election. This is because all the votes received by candidates that lost in their constituencies do not contribute to any gain in seats by their parties.

"Because Parliament is not representative of the electorate. First past the post is unfair; how can we end up with a majority Government when they may have been elected by less than 50% of those eligible to vote."

A more proportional voting system would see the number of seats controlled by parties reflect more accurately the breakdown of votes across the country. To do this constituencies would need to grow so each one had several seats to elect people to, which could then be divided among the parties according to the proportion of the votes won.

A range of systems were suggested, including *Alternative Vote Plus*, *Single Transferable Vote* and *Additional Member System*. Each of these systems has different effects. Proportional voting systems are used in the UK in elections to the devolved parliaments and the European Parliament. There were also many views about *how* this change might happen – referendum, citizens' convention, etc – but the objective was the same.

The most proportional voting system used internationally is the Single Transferable Vote (STV). Under STV voters are asked to rank individual candidates in order of preference, expressing as many preferences as they wish, up to the maximum number of candidates who are standing.

The votes are initially counted on the basis of first preferences, with candidates having to obtain a specific number of votes to be elected. If not all the seats have been filled the excess votes won by elected candidates are transferred to people's second preferences, with any candidates who then meet the numerical quota also being elected. The returning officer will make a decision to eliminate candidates who have no realistic chance of reaching the quota. This process is repeated until all the seats in the constituency have been filled.

In 2005 Labour won 55.2% of seats with only 35.3% of the vote, while the Liberal Democrats won only 9.6% of seats with 22.1% of the vote. With 1% of the vote the Greens won no seats.

Arguments in favour

- More proportional results are often considered fairer as they make the distribution of power better
- reflect the distribution of votes.
- No votes are wasted.
- Small parties would be more likely to get a seat and therefore a voice in parliament.

Issues / arguments against

- Coalition Governments would be much more likely, meaning instability and excessive influence for those parties that hold the balance of power.
- There would be no clear link between individual candidates and the constituency.
- In order to be proportional this would require constituencies too large to be meaningful to voters.
- This is more complex than FPTP and may therefore cause confusion.

2. Introduce the Alternative Vote for General Elections

(32) 

Some people suggested *Alternative Vote (AV)*, a non-proportional system. Again, there were many views about *how* this change might happen.

Under Alternative Vote (AV), voters would be asked to rank candidates by order of preference (1, 2, 3, etc) rather than placing a cross (X) next to a single candidate's name. If no candidate secures a majority of first preference votes, then second, third and even fourth preferences are taken into account until such point as

one candidate has secured support from at least 50 per cent of those casting ballots. *It will mean each area will have MPs who represent the voters preferences. In some Areas there are Tory votes that have no representative for miles, likewise in others for Labour Voters.*"

Currently parties tend to invest much more energy and resources in seats considered "marginal", where a relatively small change in the numbers voting for each party would change who wins the seat – those seats that are very tightly poised between parties. Those supporting a party not deemed in the race would via AV still be able to impact upon the outcome.

"In an AV system, one no longer has a need for tactical voting, and the fear of wasting your vote on a minority candidate is eliminated. With AV, you can guarantee that your vote will be counted in the competition between the two strongest candidates whatever your first preference. It is, in short, empowering for the voter."

Arguments in favour

- Everyone elected to Parliament would have some kind of support from at least half of those who voted in their constituency.
- Candidates would be encouraged to broaden their appeal in order to achieve higher preferences from those who might not rank them first.
- The system would be relatively easy to understand, particularly because existing constituency boundaries would be kept the same.

Issues / arguments against

- The system can be even more unequal in the relationship between votes cast in a General Election and seats gained by parties one than the existing First-Past-the-Post System.
- The 'majority' that many candidates won would be based partly on voters who did not want them as their first choice.
- Campaigning could become more complex and confusing to voters, since candidates would be aiming not only to win outright support, but to gain second preferences as well.

3. Make voting compulsory

(29) 

Providing that people meet the legal requirements they are entitled to vote but whether they do so or not is their choice. Turnout is currently low (just 61.3% of eligible voters chose to vote in 2005) therefore MPs can be elected and Governments formed despite the fact that a majority of people either did not vote or voted against them.

"Every person will be able to state their preference on the ballot paper. Individuals will be able to be actively rejected by the electorate rather than elected by default. This will have the effect of spreading empowerment to the electorate and concentrating the minds of those seeking election towards being representative of the electorate rather than self or party interest."

Compulsory voting would mean that if a person were legally entitled to vote they would also be legally required to do so. Failure to vote would be punishable.

Compulsory voting is currently practised in a number of countries including Australia, Switzerland and Brazil.

Arguments in favour

- Compulsory voting would ensure that turnout was high therefore increasing the chance that MPs and the Governments had electoral support.
- Some consider voting a civic duty.
- This may encourage more active engagement in the electoral process. Voters may be more inclined to investigate the different candidates and enquire about where they stand on policy issues.

Issues / arguments against

- There are many reasons why people do not vote, for example they may have to work during the hours when polling stations are open. These people would be punished for failing to vote even if it was not their fault.

- Some people choose not to vote because they wish to demonstrate their dissatisfaction with the choice of candidates available or with the political system more widely. This right would be taken away from them
- This rule would have to be legally enforced, which may be interpreted as an infringement on peoples' rights. This could foster further resentment towards the political system.
- Forcing people to vote does not ensure that they will become more engaged with the political process; it may mean that the election of candidates is dependent on the choices of people who do not want to make them, who resent the burden, and who therefore make their decisions arbitrarily.

Reference:

http://www.aec.gov.au/pdf/voting/compulsory_voting.pdf

4. Allow people to cast their votes online, by telephone, by text message or by television

(43)



There are currently two ways in which you can cast a vote in an election in the UK: either by post or by casting a ballot at the local polling station in your area on the day of the election (traditionally a Thursday).

"We need more voters, too many people are doing nothing on election day. Politicians are NOT all the same, nor are they all bad or all useless or any of the other things non-voters say. To work democracy needs one person one vote to be a reality."

This proposal would introduce a system of electronic voting at elections so that ballots could be transferred over the internet or television, via text messaging from mobile phones and via telephone. Those without access to technology might be catered for through library facilities and home visits.

Arguments in favour

- Electronic voting would speed up the counting of ballots.
- It would improve accessibility for elderly and disabled voters.
- Turnout at elections is very low. This would increase turnout by making voting an easier and more convenient process.

Issues / arguments against

- Confidence in democracy depends upon a fair, secure, and transparent electoral process which can be independently verified. The features necessary to guarantee these things are currently absent from electronic voting, which is subject to crashes, hacking, or the insertion of computer viruses that tamper with election results.
- It compromises the notion of a secret ballot

5. Hold elections on weekends to make it easier to vote

(1)



The Government in power at any given time has the prerogative to call a General Election, deciding on what date it is to be held. The last twenty General Elections (since 1935) have been held on a Thursday. There is nothing determining that this must be the case; it is simply a convention that has become the norm. Rules could be introduced ensuring that elections are always held on the weekend.

"I'm tired of the 'we've always done it this way' syndrome that's held this country down for far too long."

People who suggested this idea were open to a number of alternatives, including voting on public holidays or voting over several days. A weekend, though, was the main preference.

Arguments in favour

- Could help to increase turnout as some people who are unable to vote on weekdays due to other commitments may be able to on the weekend.
- Issues / arguments against
- "Modern lifestyle and work patterns mean that there is no guarantee that people are available to vote on weekends due to other demands on their time."

6. Offer 'none of the above' as an option on all ballot papers.

(32) 

People indicate their preference when voting in elections by placing a cross in the box next to their chosen candidate on the ballot paper. A further option could be added to the ballot paper indicating that the voter does not wish to support any of the candidates. The total number of votes for this option could then be calculated and recorded.

"This allows the voter to record a vote of No Confidence. There is no cost involved as the ballot papers have to be printed anyway, and I think many people, who at the moment do not vote, would be willing to vote if they could use their vote in this way."

Alternatively, the number of people who intentionally 'spoil' their ballot papers (by not choosing any of the candidates but still placing their ballot paper in the ballot box) could be recorded.

Arguments in favour

- Voters could record their dissatisfaction with the option of candidates from which they have to choose thus still allowing them to exercise their democratic right.
- Might help politicians to realise when they are failing to appeal to the *electorate*.
- A distinction could be made between low turn out due to public apathy and public dissatisfaction with the choice of candidates available.

Issues / arguments against

- If the numbers of 'spoilt' ballots are recorded it would be difficult to distinguish between those spoilt intentionally and accidentally (though a 'none of the above' option would solve this).
- If large numbers of people voted for 'none of the above' the legitimacy of the candidate elected would be undermined, potentially making their job untenable.

7. Add policy area scores to ballots

(1) 

Currently General Election ballot papers only allow one to vote for one of the candidates running to be MP in your constituency.

This idea suggests the addition of a scorecard to the ballot paper so that each voter may not only cast their vote but evaluate the performance of Government on a scale of one to ten in the following policy areas: health, law and order, education, foreign policy and economic affairs.

Completing this section would be completely voluntary and would have no influence on the way each individual's vote is cast or the affect it has. The results of the scoring would then be published nationally and by constituency.

A system like this does not currently exist anywhere in the world.

Arguments in favour

- Governments often use election results to claim a mandate for their policies. With a scorecard system in place the extent of this mandate would be clearer and explicitly set by the public.
- Voting would become a more meaningful experience and hence combat public frustration and increase participation.
- Parties defeating a current Government would have a clearer idea of the electorate's expectations.

Issues / arguments against

- The scorecard may cause confusion.
- The ballot paper is already quite large in some constituencies, so adding a scorecard section would be impractical.
- Politicians might manipulate the results to their particular advantage.

8. Lower the minimum voting age to 16

Under the current system, the voting age in the UK is 18 years old, the same as the legal requirement for purchasing alcohol, cigarettes and to apply for a credit card.

	Lower the voting age to 16	The family vote
What does this mean?	At the age of 16 a person can leave school, live independently, join the armed forces and pays tax; lowering the voting age would align with these rights and perhaps provide an incentive to encourage active participation in politics at a younger age.	This idea would mean that parents act in trust for the votes of their children. The vote would be discussed with the child and used the way they would like.
Argued in favour	Stopping 16 and 17 year olds from voting can disenfranchise them from politics as they feel that their views aren't heard. Lowering the voting age would force MPs to take a more active interest in issues concerning young people. If at 16 someone is paying taxes then they should arguably have the right to determine how they are spent.	Whilst the child is growing up it would provide an introduction to politics and the surrounding issues. It would mean a family has more power in the polls and would represent the family unit rather than one or two adults voting.
Issues / arguments against	Some may feel that at 16 young people are not mature enough to vote and may not take it seriously. They may be easily influenced by the views of their parents rather than formulating their own decisions.	Could this be regulated to prevent the parent using the vote in their favour?

9. Extend voting rights to convicted criminals serving prison terms

Currently, convicted British prisoners are not allowed to vote thanks to a rule dating back to the introduction of the Forfeiture Act of 1870. The Act effectively saw prisoners as no longer being part of human society.

In many European countries, including Ireland, France, Spain and the Netherlands, prisoners possess the right to vote. In France and Spain there is an option for judges to impose the loss of voting rights as a further punishment.

Arguments in favour

- It helps with prisoners' rehabilitation, keeping them in touch with society and their role as citizens within the wider community.
- There is no evidence that taking away prisoners' votes reduces crime.
- The right to vote is a human right – prisoners should lose their liberty but not their right to vote.

Issues / arguments against:

- Once you commit a crime and go to prison you forfeit your right to have a say in how society is run.
- There are issues of the organisation and cost involved in getting large numbers of prisoners to vote.

10. Give the public the right to initiate referendums.

A referendum is a direct vote in which an entire electorate is asked to support or reject a particular proposal. It is a form of *direct democracy* in which citizens have a direct say on a particular political

issue rather than the decision being taken by the politicians who they elect (representative democracy).

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"Transfer power back to the electorate as currently you have 1 vote every 5 years on a manifesto that is regularly ignored and would give confidence to people that they genuinely effect change and have control over the future of their country. It may reduce the currently feeling of resigned helplessness and boost participation in democracy."

Referendums are rare in British politics and can currently only be called by the Government; when referendums have taken place it has been because the Government has decided to use them to settle important constitutional issues.

The idea of this reform is that anything that may have deep implications for future generations and affects the country deeply would be put to a referendum, allowing the public to have a voice in the larger issues that affect the whole country, rather than just the party that happens to be in charge.

This reform could include a '*preferendum*' system whereby citizens can initiate a referendum. This would happen if a petition supporting a referendum on a particular issue succeeds in attracting a certain percentage of signatures from the electorate (usually within a given time period of say three months).

At this point people would be invited to submit their answers to the policy in question and a panel of *stakeholders* – people/organisations who are affected by the question – would sift through the submissions to identify key ideas and create a shortlisted set of options.

These ideas would then be put to a public vote of preference and the option with the broadest support would be chosen, not just the one with most first preferences.

Arguments in favour

- Regular referendums would extend democracy, allowing people to participate in political decision-making more than once every four or five years in an election.
- Referendums provide a clear answer to a question the Government might be asking.
- Referendums could be used check a Government which is out of control and abusing its power.
- Referendums legitimise important issues.

Issues / arguments against

- Referendums are inconsistent with our system of representative democracy in which politicians are elected to take complex decisions on our behalf as part of a long-term programme of Government.
- Referendums might result in the 'tyranny of the majority' where laws are passed that abuse the rights of a minority.
- Issues might be too complex for a mere yes/no vote or for the public to understand all of the related issues.
- Referendums can play into the hands of wealthy individuals and sections of the media who can afford to run expensive campaigns on a particular issue.

11. Remove the need for a deposit for General Election candidates

(13) 

When submitting their nomination papers to stand in a General Election, candidates must currently deposit £500. Only candidates who receive over five per cent of the total votes cast within their constituency have their deposit returned; others are forfeited.

The major political parties can afford to offer up the deposit (and even to lose it) whereas individuals and smaller parties may not be able to. This may put some people off standing and prevent smaller parties from putting forward candidates in more constituencies.

Deposits could be removed, allowing people to stand for election for free.

"The money deposit to be replaced by a requirement of 200 signatures, in order to be eligible to stand as a candidate."

Arguments in favour

- Any rule that makes wealth a bar to entry into the political process is essentially undemocratic.
- Independent MPs are beneficial to the democratic process as they do not have a political party putting pressure on them about how they vote or what they say on an issue.

Issues / arguments against

- Elections are costly events and forfeited deposits help ease the financial burden.
- The financial barrier ensures that only people really serious about the election stand. Joke candidates are usually put off by the likelihood of losing £500.

12. Give local people the right to 'recall' their MP and hold fresh elections in their constituency

(95) 

Although there were different views on the rules that should govern this process, the right to recall was the core idea in these submissions.

"Many of the MPs in the expenses scandal would've been dispatched by their constituencies long since. But they are still there, collecting salaries and will, at the end of the parliamentary term, collect generous severance pay and pensions."

When MPs disgrace themselves and let down their constituents dramatically, it would be possible to force a vote in that area over whether the MP should step down. At the moment, if an MP's scandalous behaviour is discovered they can remain as long as they survive the media and retain the confidence of their party leader – until the next election anyway, which may be years away.

"People have no real power over MPs' behaviour except at election time ... too long to wait in some instances."

In certain States of America, there is the ability to 'recall' those in power through means such as a mandatory referendum if a petition receives enough votes. Gray Davis, the Governor of California until 2003, was recalled in such a way and lost the subsequent referendum.

Arguments in favour

- MPs are there to represent their constituents and are only in Westminster as a result of the legitimacy provided by their constituents' votes. Should new information about their behaviour and character come to light, it is fair to give the opportunity to constituents to reconsider their vote.
- The right to recall MPs is useful in the circumstances we find ourselves in now, when MPs have acted within the rules set down, but in a manner most would consider unethical and find deeply disturbing in elected representatives.

Issues / arguments against

- A Government sometimes has to make difficult, unpopular decisions. With mechanisms like this in play, they would be less able to do so since they would fear a dramatic public response. Popular decisions made in the wake of sudden disturbing information will not necessarily be the best ones.
- Fraud could be a problem, as fraudulent signatures on a petition could result in undemocratic recalls and a waste of voter time and money.

References:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Recall_election

<http://conservativehome.blogs.com/centreriht/2009/05/we-should-have-the-right-to-recall-mps.html>

13. Redraw constituency boundaries to equalise the population of constituencies

(1) 

What does this mean?

There are currently 646 constituencies in Great Britain, with each one represented by one MP. Four

Parliamentary Boundary Commissions determine constituency boundaries: one each for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

"The current borough boundary traps an inner city community in an outer London borough and the ward boundaries split that community and combine it with more affluent areas so as to disguise the deprivation in poverty assessments."

The size of each constituency is meant to correspond as closely as practicable to the electoral quota, which is calculated by dividing the number of eligible voters by the number of constituencies in a particular part of Great Britain.

"...our local council sits in Inverness, 120 miles away. Planning committees meet in Lairg, over two hours drive away. How can people get involved? And who would want to be a councillor with that kind of travelling every week?"

Whilst the average electoral constituency size is 68,000 there is variation: the largest constituency contains 110,000 voters whilst the smallest has only 22,000. Constituency boundaries could be re-drawn so that each constituency had the same population or the same number of people who are eligible to vote.

Arguments in favour

- One of the fundamental principles of democracy is that all votes are of equal value; this would be the case if all constituencies had equal electoral populations.

Issues / arguments against

- There are already bodies in place to determine constituency boundaries: they keep parliamentary constituencies under continuous review as well as conducting a general review every eight to twelve years.
- Populations are always shifting therefore the electoral map would have to be redrawn continuously.
- The current system applies common sense and considers other factors when determining constituency boundaries. For example, the two constituencies noted above as having the largest and smallest number of voters are both islands. Most constituencies are far closer to the national average.

Reference:

<http://www.parliament.uk/commons/lib/research/briefings/snpc-01158.pdf>

14. Elect a proportion of MPs each year

(4) 

All MPs are currently elected at the same time at the General Election. General Elections usually occur every four to five years but their timing is the prerogative of the Government.

A new system could be introduced in which a set proportion of constituencies are put up for election each year. This rotating system would mean that elected MPs still sit for a five-year period but would overlap with each other rather than all being voted in at the same time.

Arguments in favour

- Taking the emphasis off General Elections would mean voters pay more attention to what their local candidates are saying and doing rather than concentrating on the party leaders who dominate the headlines.
- Having near continuous elections could help maintain people's interest in politics.

Issues / arguments against

- Yearly elections would mean that there was the yearly possibility of Governments changing thus making effective *governance* impossible.
- Legislation takes a long time to pass through Parliament and a continuously changing chamber would further slow the process, as newcomers would have to be brought up to date.
- General Elections heighten the public's awareness of politics, as it becomes the centre of the media's attention. People would lose interest if elections were happening all the time.
- Politicians would spend even more time than they currently do campaigning around the country. Party leaders would have to continuously tour contested constituencies to try and get support for their candidates.

Chapter 2

Parliament

Parliament is the central institution of British democracy and the supreme law-making body in the land.

The proposals in this category address how Parliament works as an institution and how it can be reformed to better perform its function of scrutinising law and Government policy, as well as better representing the interests of the nation. The ideas recommend changes for both chambers: the House of Commons and the House of Lords.

Of the two, the Commons is the only one which is democratically elected, yet it is often accused of being ineffective in its role due to its domination by the Government, whose members are drawn from the House. The ideas proposed for the House of Commons look at how to give Parliament more independence and control over its own affairs so that MPs can check Government, improve the quality of legislation and represent the interests of voters.

The Lords is predominantly a selected rather than elected chamber. However, the three main parties are now committed to it eventually becoming an elected chamber. The reforms proposed for the House of Lords concentrate on how its membership is to be selected and how this can be done so as to provide an effective check on the Commons, whilst at the same time compliment its work of scrutinising and revising legislation.

MP's and the House of Commons

15. Introduce fixed term parliaments
16. Increase the number of issues to be decided by free votes.
17. Give Parliament the power to set its own timetable
18. Reduce or eliminate the use of Statutory instruments by Government
19. Define MP's pay, conditions and job specification through a public process of consultation
20. Ban retiring MP's from private sector jobs associated with their parliamentary business
21. Strengthen Select Committees

House of Lords

22. Introduce A fully elected House of Lords
23. Abolish the House of Lords entirely
24. Select the Upper Chamber by lot from the population.
25. Ban members of the House of Lords from becoming Government ministers
26. Create an Upper Chamber that represents different sections of society
27. Remove or limit the power of Prime Ministerial patronage and prevent the appointment of MPs to the House of Lords

General

28. Move Parliament to a location near the geographical centre of the UK
29. Abolish the Royal Prerogative powers and place them on a statutory basis
30. Abolish the Monarchy and introduce an elected Head of State
31. Allow the public to elect senior Judges
32. Directly elect the prime minister



15. Introduce fixed term parliaments

(65) 

Presently the incumbent Government is required to hold a General Election up to five years since the last election, but this can be held at any time and often at the convenience of the reigning Government.

"To stop Prime ministers hanging on when they should be gone."

To introduce fixed term Parliaments would mean that there would be a set timescale for the General Election and which would create a more level playing field for all parties so that they have equal time to prepare for the election.

Arguments in favour:

- Reduced power of the Prime Minister to call an election at a time when it is an advantage to the governing party.
- Increased transparency in the build up to the election.
- The Prime Minister would no longer have to go to the Monarch asking for permission to hold a General Election, removing the Monarchy even further from modern politics.

Issues / arguments against:

- A fixed term parliament allows for a Government with a small majority to continue until the end of its term.
- The present system, with its flexibility, has worked well for centuries.

16. Increase the number of issues to be decided by free votes

(63) 

Political parties currently dominate voting in the House of Commons. MPs vote on pieces of legislation, deciding whether or not they should become law. Whilst parties and MP's do discuss how they will vote, they do so behind closed doors. The party leaderships have such a level of effective control over their party's MPs that they instruct them how to vote on many issues. As a result very few pieces of Government legislation ever fail. Party whips are used to enforce the agenda of leaders. They use a combination of threats and promises to ensure compliance.

However, some votes in the Commons are designated as 'free votes' and MPs are free to make their own decision. Free votes are rare and usually confined to moral issues such as embryo research, capital punishment and euthanasia. Many of the pieces of progressive social legislation of the 1960s were introduced by individual MPs (rather than by the Government) and were chosen on a free vote. The range of issues covered by free votes could be increased allowing MPs to rely on their own judgement more often.

Some people just spoke about 'reducing the power of the Whips'. But the core idea was still to allow more free votes in Parliament.

"This would make the House of Commons a true home of debate and democracy."

Arguments in favour

- Parliament is supposed to scrutinise the actions of the Government and to improve the quality of legislation by rigorously challenging and reforming it when necessary. This role is currently not effectively fulfilled as MPs are weak in the face of their leaders.
- MPs should be more concerned with representing the views of their constituents rather than supporting their party's agenda.
- The public would have more respect for politicians if they believed that all their decisions were based on debate, the weighing of arguments and critical appraisal rather than simply doing as they were told.

Issues / arguments against

- It would be difficult to introduce rules determining when free votes must be used and when parties could still employ the whip system.
- The party leadership and whips do not have as much power over how their MPs' work as is often assumed. MPs can and do rebel on issues that they feel strongly about. For example, in recent years

Labour MPs have rebelled against their leadership on issues such as the invasion of Iraq and anti-terrorism legislation.

- A Government needs a certain level of confidence that it can pass the legislation that it promised to voters in its pre-election manifesto. Free votes do not offer that guarantee.

17. Give the power of Parliamentary timetabling to Parliament

(3) 

At the beginning of each parliamentary session, many bills are presented to Parliament for debate which have not been proposed by the Government. These are known as *Private Members' Bills* – bills suggested by backbench MPs or peers of any political party. However, due to Government control of parliamentary time, only a small number of such bills ever get debated and only a very small number will ever become law.

"In my experience of working with Parliamentarians the lack of opportunity for a back-bencher to influence debates is astounding. Parliament should be opened up so that all MP and Peers, and not just the Government of the day, get a chance to introduce or influence legislation that is important to them."

The House of Commons is usually in session for about 170 days per year with about 700 hours spent debating Bills. Of this about 650 are taken by the Government, which has precedence at every sitting except for 10 Fridays in which around 50 hours is given to Private Members Bills. Thanks to its majority in the House of Commons, the Government effectively has exclusive domination of the House's agenda and can stop others seeking control.

This proposal would take control of the parliamentary agenda away from the Government and give it to the House by, for example, establishing a cross-party committee of backbenchers which proposes a timetable to be voted on by the House.

Arguments in favour

- Parliament should have the power to set its own agenda. It is undemocratic that a body responsible for holding the Government to account and representing the interests of the country as a whole should be dominated by Government.
- It would create a more independent Parliament and lead to more effective criticism and scrutiny of the Government's legislation.
- It would give more time to Private Member's Bills and the concerns of backbench MPs.

Issues / arguments against

- The Government should have the power to fulfil the commitments it has made in its manifesto – this requires it to have control of parliamentary business.
- Voters in an election are electing the party of Government. It should not be in the power of MPs from other parties to frustrate the business of the elected Government through control of parliamentary business.

18. Reduce or eliminate the use of Statutory Instruments by Governments

(8) 

A growing quantity of law in the UK is now issued in the form of secondary legislation. Secondary legislation is not subject to the same degree of parliamentary scrutiny as primary legislation; and in many cases is not debated or voted on at all. This can mean that important legislation is not properly considered by Parliament.

"Too often, the Government has passed a "Christmas tree bill", full of fine aspirations but with all the nasty bits smuggled through later under poorly-scrutinised statutory instruments. This must stop. Serious lawmaking must have scrutiny."

A *Statutory Instrument* is the primary form in which secondary or delegated legislation is made in the UK. Parliament is supposed to be able to hold the Government to account in the scrutinising and amending of legislation. However, the use of Statutory Instruments prevents the detailed debate and scrutiny that is required to keep Government in check.

By reducing the use of Statutory Instruments, legislation would come under greater scrutiny by Parliament before it is passed as a law and increase the debates over legislation in Parliament.

Arguments in favour:

- This would prevent Government from abusing the current system and bypassing Parliament in the creation of new laws
- This will restore the power of Parliament over the executive and rejuvenate the democratic process for passing legislation

Issues / arguments against:

- While subject to a lower degree of parliamentary scrutiny, secondary legislation is provided for by primary legislation, which has been fully approved by Parliament.
- Secondary legislation enables Government to be flexible and respond rapidly to events.

19. Define MPs' pay, conditions and job specification through a process of public consultation

(50) 

Currently MPs are paid a salary of £64,766. The salaries of MPs are increased each year by an agreed formula based on pay within the civil service. Salaries are generally reviewed by the Senior Salaries Review Body in the first year of each new parliament.

"If we want MPs to 'serve us instead of sponging off the taxpayer', we need to give them some real work to do. That work should be actually thinking for themselves in order to hold the Government to account and consider legislation."

MPs' salaries are increased by their expenses allowances, which last year averaged about £116,000. Expenses consist of three main categories: costs incurred by the necessity of staying away from home, costs incurred in running an office, and the costs of communicating with constituents. There also is a parliamentary pension scheme under which members pay up to 10% of their wages per year.

Last year parliament sat for 165 days, keeping the following hours: 2.30-10.30pm on Mondays and Tuesdays, 11.30am-7.30pm on Wednesdays, 10.30am-6.30pm on Thursdays and 9.30am-3pm on Fridays. MPs are also expected to work in their constituencies and with their parties.

Parliament and the media spotlight are considered a stressful and confrontational working environment.

Arguments in favour

- The MPs' expenses scandal deeply undermined the legitimacy of Parliament and so far has not been satisfactorily resolved.
- MPs should not have the final say over their own pay and working conditions; *self-regulation* does not work.
- The people should set the pay and conditions of those in their employ.
- The working hours deter many people, particularly those with families from running for office and so act as a barrier to equality of opportunity.

Issues / arguments against

- The public is so angry about the expenses scandal, in which many MPs not guilty of serious misdemeanour were equally condemned, that they may not be rational about either the pay MPs should receive, or the conditions they should work under.
- A public consultation could fuel 'anti politics' from the public
- MPs because of the nature of their job cannot simply work to rule. Being an MP is more of a lifestyle than a job in the sense that you can be on call 24/7.

20. Ban retiring MPs from working in private sector jobs associated with their positions for a period of years

There are rules in place regarding the future employment of some public servants when they leave office. However, these do not currently apply to MPs. Government ministers and civil servants must obtain Government approval before accepting an outside appointment within two years of leaving office. The independent Advisory Committee on Business Appointments (ACoBA) judges these cases.

The rules are designed with two main concerns in mind. Firstly, that ministers or civil servants might be recruited by outside bodies in order to help them gain access or influence within Government. Secondly, that the prospect of future employment might lead to a serving official making decisions with the interests of an outside body in mind.

The idea is that similar rules could be introduced regarding the future employment of MPs.

Arguments in favour

- Concerns about ministers and civil servants also apply to MPs – that they may be recruited as a means of influencing policy decisions and that they may act in the interests of prospective future employers.
- There are many examples of MPs and indeed ministers gaining employment which it is reasonable to assume is linked to their former jobs.
- Politicians are seen as self-serving and careerist by many members of the public. This measure may help to address this as MPs will not be assumed to be auditioning for future jobs

Issues / arguments against

- Some people argue that the current system of regulation for ministers and civil servants is ineffectual. A similar system for MPs is unlikely to fare better.
- Once MPs have finished serving the country their career choices are their private concern.

21. Strengthen Select Committees

A *select committee* is a committee made up of a small number of parliamentary members appointed to deal with particular areas or issues. Committees can be appointed from the House of Commons or Lords or as a 'joint committee' drawn from both. Most are made up of MPs and are drawn from several parties.

"I am concerned that laws are passed without proper consideration. I would like to see MPs spend more time examining the detail of proposed legislation and new independent select committees to help them do so."

The Commons Select Committees are generally responsible for overseeing the work of Government departments and agencies, whereas those of the Lords look at more general issues. They can call witnesses, scrutinising the policies and activities of the Government. Their effectiveness is currently restricted. Party leaders appoint the committee chairs; this reduces the likelihood of them seriously criticising the Government. They also lack the power to enforce their decisions and therefore can only make recommendations.

"The Select Committees should have the power and the duty to scrutinise in detail Government legislative proposals (which the present set up clearly fails to do), and should have the power to amend / reject Government proposals if warranted."

There are a number of ways in which they could be strengthened. For example, MPs could be given a free and secret vote on who should chair select committees, this would increase their ability to act independently of the Government. Also, they could be given the right to initiate bills and to make major public appointments that are currently made by the Government.

Arguments in favour

- Empowering committees would mean MPs had an alternative career path, which rewarded those willing to scrutinise and question the Government.
- Committees currently perform a vital role investigating important issues, but crucially lack the power of enforcement.

- Committees are more accessible than the Government. They are easier for organisations, experts and interest groups to submit their views to.
- Committee reports are currently too easily sidelined by the Government.

Issues / arguments against

- Strengthening committees would mean additional costs for the taxpayer. For example, they would need to employ more staff to help with their increased workload. Equally, a higher salary may be needed to make committee chairs a genuine alternative career option.

References:

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/8387059.stm

<http://www.power2010.org.uk/blog/entry/strengthen-select-committees-and-have-mps-that-can-hold-Government-to-account/>

22. Introduce A fully elected House of Lords

(59) 

"Make the current house of lords a fully elected body of 100 dealing solely with the interests of the UK as a whole i.e. Foreign Office, MOD etc."

A fully elected second chamber would mean the removal of the existing Lords and their replacement with an elected membership, serving fixed terms in office. With the legitimacy that comes from being elected, this would also almost certainly mean that the second chamber would gain more powers.

This includes those who merely wanted members of the House of Lords to be selected in a 'more democratic' manner, as well as those advocating a 'wholly' and 'majority' elected Lords.

"The House of Lords has run out of steam and has lost most of the credibility it once had. It no longer performs a useful parliamentary function. It is essential that a second chamber be able to mount effective challenges to the legislative decisions of the first chamber. But its membership must not merely mirror that of the first chamber."

Arguments in favour:

- A basic principle of democracy is that people who make laws should be accountable to the people.
- An elected second chamber would weaken the political patronage of the Prime Minister and the suspicion of corruption this brings with it.
- The present House of Lords is seen as an elitist and out-dated institution that doesn't represent the diversity of the UK population

Issues / arguments against:

- An appointed second chamber brings people with significant knowledge and expertise into Parliament who may not otherwise be there, including scientists, people from the arts and the leaders of civil society organisations.
- Elections, proper salaries and research facilities could considerably increase the costs of running Parliament
- There would be fewer independent members and more professional politicians under the control of the political parties
- It confuses things to have two elected chambers – a second one could undermine the Commons.

Reference:

http://www.parliament.uk/mpslordsandoffices/mps_and_lords/analysis_by_composition.cfm

23. Abolish the House of Lords entirely

(13) 

There are two chambers within the current UK Parliament: the House of Lords and the House of Commons.

House of Commons. This is known as a *bicameral* system. Under this reform the House of Lords would be abolished and a *unicameral* system would be created with the House of Commons the sole chamber in Parliament.

New Zealand and Sweden are examples of unicameral systems. In the UK the Scottish Parliament, and the assemblies for Wales and Northern Ireland are unicameral.

Arguments in favour:

- With one chamber the law-making process would be much simpler and faster with less possibility of deadlock between the chambers.
- Having one chamber, instead of two, would mean fewer politicians and would reduce the costs of running Parliament.
- It would mean clearer lines of *accountability*, as only one body would be responsible for making law.

Issues / arguments against:

- There would be no restraint on the majority in the Commons or scrutiny of its work. This could lead to poor quality laws, unpopular laws, or laws that limit rights and freedoms.
- The diversity of society cannot be fully represented in only one chamber. Unicameral systems are best suited to smaller nations where a second chamber is not considered necessary.

24. Select the Upper Chamber by lot from the population

(14) 

This proposal would see the House of Lords reformed in line with the so-called “Athenian” model of democracy.

In Athenian democracy, decision-makers were selected randomly by lot (or by ‘sortition’) from the people using a lottery-style system. The idea was that each citizen had an equal chance of being selected. Since they came from the people, decision-makers were thought to be responsive to the needs of the many and not just a powerful few. Today, we use a similar system to appoint juries by lot from the electoral register.

If this proposal were introduced it would mean that instead of being appointed (or voted for at elections in a reformed chamber, as proposed by the main parties) members of the second chamber would be selected at random from the electoral register for fixed terms with everyone having an equal chance of being selected. Those selected would be compensated financially for their work.

“Let’s replace the House of Lords with a randomly selected panel of 120 ordinary people who have never stood for public office, held a position under the crown, or studied law, politics or economics.”

“Replace the House of Lords with a citizens’ jury, drawn by lottery (like the court jury system). Each jury would sit for a fixed amount of time (6 months?) and be able to call upon expert witnesses to testify before it and inform its decisions. It would have much the same powers as the current House of Lords.”

Arguments in favour

- A second chamber selected at random would be far more statistically representative of the people – in terms of class, sex, ethnicity, religion etc – than either an elected or an appointed chamber. It would therefore be more representative of the people’s interests.
- Whereas both appointment and elections favour the powerful, the rich and the famous, this system treats everyone equally as everyone will have an equal chance of being selected.
- It is a less corruptible system than appointments or elections (which can be manipulated by money).
- A chamber with an entirely different form of membership to the House of Commons could provide a useful check on the Commons and fresh perspectives on legislation.

Issues / arguments against

- Being a law-maker involves making complex decisions over important issues and a system of random selection takes no account of the skills or experience of people who are put into office – appointment and election do.
- The system could put people with extreme or minority views in power.

25. Ban members of the House of Lords from becoming Government ministers

(10) 

Government ministers are senior politicians with responsibility over a particular area of public policy. The most senior ministers are members of the Cabinet and generally head an entire Government department, such as Health or Defence. Ministers are appointed by the Prime Minister from either the House of Commons or the House of Lords.

In recent history, it has been very rare for Government ministers to be appointed from the House of Lords. In the current Government, however, several Cabinet ministers and junior ministers are peers.

Under this proposal the Prime Minister would not be permitted to appoint peers as Government ministers and would instead have to appoint all ministers from the House of Commons.

Arguments in favour

- It is undemocratic that unelected members of the House of Lords should hold positions in Government. Government ministers should be accountable to the electorate come election time.

Issues / arguments against

- Allowing the Prime Minister to appoint ministers from the House of Lords widens the pool of talent from which he or she can draw from. It allows people to be brought into Government with significant knowledge and expertise who may not otherwise be there if they had to stand for election.

26. Create an Upper Chamber that represents different groups or sections of society

(3) 

Under the proposed reform the Lords would become an elected chamber, but constituencies would not be arranged geographically as they are with the House of Commons. Instead they would be arranged by 'sector', representing different groups or sections of society.

Individuals wishing to sit in the second chamber would put themselves forward to stand in a particular sector in which they had special knowledge or experience. The reform would bring expert advice and advocacy in to the scrutiny process from large civil society groups and charities.

"That in any reform of the House of Lords that created an elected house, constituencies are not arranged geographically but by 'sector' such as Education, Health, Industry, Transport, Environment, Social Services, Local Government, Agriculture, Financial Services, Justice, Defence, Science, Arts, Sport etc... Voters, during annual registration for the electoral roll or by some other method, would have the option to choose which sector or (preferably) sectors they wished to vote in. The number of seats per sectoral constituency would be set to reflect the relative importance in terms of parliamentary work rather than by voter numbers."

Voters, during annual registration for the electoral roll or by some other method, would have the option to choose which sector or sectors they wished to vote in. The number of seats per sectoral constituency would be set to reflect the relative importance in terms of parliamentary work rather than by voter numbers. Examples of different sectors might include Education, Health, Industry, Transport, Environment, Social Services, *Local Government*, Agriculture, Financial Services etc.

Arguments in favour

- This would lead to elected members in the second chamber with real knowledge of the various sectors of Government and a real passion to ensure that these sectors are properly and efficiently organised.
- The second chamber would be more democratic than it is now as it would be elected but it would not be duplicating the work of the Commons, and could offer a different perspective on things, as it would have a different type of membership.
- It would lead to more independent members as the chamber would be less likely to be controlled by political parties than either an appointed chamber or one elected by geographical constituency.

Issues / arguments against

- This system would be too complicated to operate and too confusing for voters.
- We don't need politicians with 'expertise' in a particular field; we need other qualities, such as good

judgement and a willingness to listen to the electorate.

- If the aim is to have the best 'experts' in different fields then surely a system of appointment, as we have now, is preferable to elections.

27. Remove or limit the power of Prime Ministerial patronage and prevent the appointment of MPs to the House of Lords

(17)



Under our present system, when a Prime Minister retires from the House of Commons he or she is often granted peerage which elevates them to the House of Lords. As well this he/she may ask the Monarch to bestow peerages to any number of people of his or her choosing; which often includes former cabinet ministers and MPs, this is known as Prime Ministers Resignation Honours.

"The House should negotiate the order of business with the Government. This will never happen if MPs have an expectation of Prime Ministerial patronage. MPs should help to choose ministers, but not from their own ranks. In time this must become a firm convention. Governments will never accept this until forced to do so by grass roots campaigning."

In May 2000 the House of Lords Appointments Commission was established to vet all of the future nominations for Membership of the House of Lords. In 2007 the committee reviewed Tony Blair's resignation honours list and this resulted in the "*Cash for Peerages*" scandal where no one was appointed as a peer to the House of Lords.

This reform would also prevent MPs from becoming members of the House of Lords as this is seen as a method of coercing MPs to follow the Government line and provide support in Commons on the basis being rewarded with peerage.

Arguments in favour

- The House of Lords should be a democratically elected chamber, not a reward for those who supported the previous Government.
- It would prevent former MPs from entering the House of Lords and becoming career politicians
- The reduction of powers with empowered committees to veto selections would ensure that Lords is representative and can hold the Commons to account.

Issues / arguments against

- This would prevent those who have excelled in service to Government from being rewarded.

28. Move Parliament to a location nearer the geographical centre of the UK

(1)



Political power is currently concentrated in London. Parliament could be moved to a location nearer the centre of the country thus shifting the geographical position of power.

Arguments in favour

- British politics is often accused of being London-centric; moving Parliament may mean that other parts of the country are given more political attention. Equally, as a symbolic gesture it may make politics seem more relevant and accessible to people outside of London.
- A geographically central chamber would be equally accessible from all parts of Great Britain; this may make it easier for MPs to balance parliamentary and constituency work.
- It could help to revitalise an area of the country in need of financial stimulation.

Issues / arguments against

- Relocating Parliament is not as simple as building a new chamber. The scale of the move and all of the institutions that would have to be relocated would be monumental and the cost astronomical.
- Although not geographically central, London is one of the most accessible parts of Great Britain in terms of transport links.

29. Abolish the Royal Prerogative powers and place them on a statutory basis

(8) 

The Royal Prerogative is the means by which some of the executive powers of the UK Government are carried out. It allows Governments, among other things, to go to war, regulate the Civil Service, issue passports and grant honours, all without any need for approval from Parliament.

"The Royal Prerogative should be passed to the Houses of Parliament. For example the power to go to war would be discussed and voted on by the Houses."

The Crown also opens and dismisses Parliament, turns bills that have been passed in Parliament into law, and appoints a Government following a General Election. These are mostly formalities, but the latter power especially could conceivably come into play in the case of hung parliaments.

In domestic matters, the Royal Prerogative covers

- the issuing and withdrawal of passports;
- the appointment and dismissal of ministers;
- the appointment of Queen's Counsel;
- the granting of honours;
- the appointment and regulation of the civil service;
- the commissioning of officers in the armed forces ;
- the dissolution of Parliament;
- the calling of elections.

In foreign affairs, it covers

- the declaration of war;
- the making of treaties;
- the recognition of foreign states;
- the accreditation of diplomats.

This idea would abolish the Royal Prerogative powers and prevent ministers from taking action without using the legislative process through Parliament.

Many people combined abolishing Royal Prerogative powers with abolishing the Monarch as an institution. The two have been separated here.

Arguments in favour

- This would curb the powers of the Prime Minister and ensure that Parliament can fully scrutinise the actions taken by the Government.
- The Royal Prerogative powers are a dated function from a time when the country was ruled by the Divine Right of Kings and accordingly they are no longer democratic in modern society.

Issues / arguments against

- Abolishing the Royal Prerogative powers would risk the state's ability to respond to a crisis

Reference:

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/4267761.stm>

30. Abolish the Monarchy and introduce an elected Head of State

(4) 

"The monarchy is anachronistic, utterly out of touch and gives legitimacy to the prerogative powers of a parliament which has ceased to be democratic."

Currently the Head of State in the UK is a monarch. This post is passed down through a particular family with a preference for male heirs. The monarch possesses few active political powers, although could play a part

in the decision of who to appoint as Prime Minister in the event of a hung Parliament, and when to allow another General Election to be called.

There are directly elected presidents in countries including the United States, Ireland and France. There are indirectly elected presidents in other countries including Italy and Germany.

This reform would abolish the Monarchy and mean that there would be an elected Head of State in the UK (such as a President), elected directly by all UK voters or indirectly possibly by both Houses of Parliament. Depending on how this reform was carried out, the Head of State could be more of a ceremonial role (like the present monarch) or could replace the Prime Minister as the senior political figure within the UK executive.

All of those who suggested an elected Head of State at least implied abolishing the Monarchy, though not all who called for abolishing the Monarchy suggested how a replacement would be found. The two have been combined here. There were also differences over what powers an elected Head of State should have – ceremonial or executive.

Arguments in favour

- The Monarchy is undemocratic, since the monarch is neither directly nor indirectly elected.
- The means by which the monarch is appointed is discriminatory against women, non-Anglicans, and anyone who is not a member of a particular family.
- This would mean that the Head of State was democratically accountable, directly or indirectly, to UK voters.
- The authority of the Crown and the historic powers that it has exercised has led to an undemocratic absorption of these powers by the Prime Minister and Cabinet. Reforming the role of the Crown would allow the nature and exercise of these powers to be established and legitimised in a democratic fashion.

Issues / arguments against

- The Monarchy is a longstanding source of stability in the UK constitution.
- Having an elected Head of State would bring the role into the party political arena.
- The institution of the Crown and the Windsor's are a part of our cultural heritage, and many British citizens have a great deal of support for the Monarchy. They also bring in revenue through tourism.

31. Allow the public to elect senior Judges

(4) 

The *judiciary* is an important component of the British political system. Judges interpret and implement the law; they can also in effect create law by providing precedents through their rulings that act as guidance for future cases. Further, the most senior judges in the country sit in the House of Lords and therefore have an additional influence on legislation.

Judges are currently appointed by politicians on the advice of expert bodies. The appointment of judges could be replaced by an electoral system whereby they were selected by a popular vote much in the same way that politicians are elected at General Elections.

Three countries have elected judiciaries, they are the United States, Switzerland and Japan.

Arguments in favour

- It is detrimental to democracy for such important officials to be unelected and therefore unaccountable to the public. Elections would increase their legitimacy.
- There is a lack of transparency in the appointment process.
- Elected judges would be more likely to be in tune with public opinion. Judges are often characterised as elitist and out of touch.

Issues / arguments against

- The public lack the requisite knowledge to determine who the best candidate is. Without a substantial knowledge of the law and legal proceedings it is difficult to know how good a candidate would be at doing their job. As a result political style will replace merit as the criteria for selection.
- Running for election would distract judges from their responsibilities and duties. Their time would be taken up with campaigning and seeking campaign funds.

- Judges need a certain degree of protection from the public in order to do their jobs properly. Exposing them to elections would mean that their decisions may be influenced by the need to pander to public opinion. This would challenge the basic judicial principles of applying the law objectively and neutrally.
- Appointments are made by elected politicians and are therefore indirectly democratic.

32. Directly elect the Prime Minister

(24) 

Currently the Prime Minister is not directly elected but is appointed by the Monarch from the House of Commons, as the leader of the party with the greatest majority in Parliament. This is also used in other countries using the same system such as New Zealand, Australia, Canada and India.

Much of this role is not clearly defined in law, but it involves managing the Cabinet, the Civil Service and machinery of Government, and leading the party of Government both in Parliament and the country.

Under this reform, the Prime Minister would be directly elected to office by the population and he/she would not be a member of the House of Commons.

Arguments in favour:

- A figure wielding as much power as the Prime Minister should be required to obtain a direct electoral mandate
- The wide range of unclearly defined powers possessed by the Prime Minister enabling him or her at least at times to dominate political decision making in a way that is detrimental to democratic processes.
- Having a Prime Minister based in the House of Commons compromises the autonomy of Parliament.

Arguments/issues against:

- Having a single person responsible for leading the party and heading the Government is valuable from the point of view of clarity.
- Having an indirectly elected Prime Minister means that they are always dependent upon the support of the House of Commons, and can be held to account by it.

Chapter 3

Political Parties

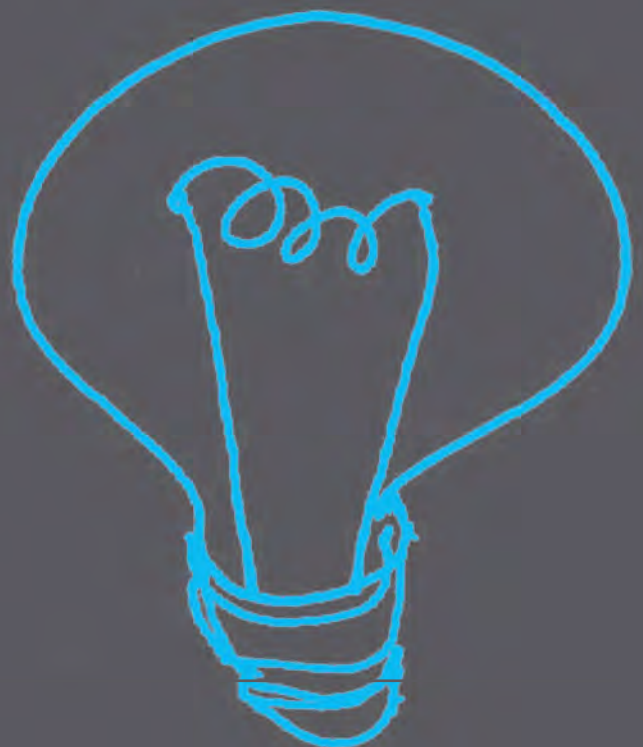
As the organisations that seek to attain and maintain political power, parties play a central role in our democracy. In their competition for power within Government, parties express distinctive ideologies and programmes which they hope will attract voters. In the UK it is the party that can command a majority in the House of Commons that forms the Government.

The UK has two dominant parties: the Labour party and the Conservative party. In recent history power has alternated between these two parties. The Liberal Democrats are the third largest party and, along with several other parties, including Plaid Cymru (the Party of Wales) and the Scottish National Party, hold a significant amount of seats in the UK Parliament.

Because of their dominant role in the political process, how parties conduct their business will determine the type of choices we have at election time and whether or not our politics is open and free from corruption. That is why reforms in this category address such things as how political parties are funded, how they select their candidates and how they run their internal affairs.

Suggestions for Reform

33. Full disclosure of political and civil service communications with lobbyists
34. Cap the amount political parties can receive from individuals (or total amount)
35. Increase the amount of public funding available for parties and candidates
36. Expand the use of open primaries to select party candidates.
37. Make party manifesto promises legally binding
38. All parties must be democratic
39. Incentivise parties to better reflect the gender and ethnic makeup of the population



33. Full disclosure of political and civil service communications with lobbyists

(11) 

Lobbying is the practice of influencing decisions made by the Government and describes all attempts to influence legislators and public officials, whether by other legislators, constituents, or organized groups. MP's, *Lords* and other legislators can be approached by individuals asking for particular legislation to be introduced or amended, or asking for existing legislation to be carried out in a particular way. Politicians can also be paid directly for their services to lobby for a particular organisation though they must declare this in the members register of interests and in debates.

"The awe in which this Government has held the private sector has led to many problems such as PFI, banking collapse, expenditure and overreliance on management consultants, the influence of lobbyists well funded by private companies and the baleful influence of over mighty media organisations to name a few. It is a relationship in which democratic principles of openness and accountability need to apply and where the private sectors' voice does not drown out the voice of the public and less well funded organisations operating on behalf of other interest groups."

This idea relates to the communications with politicians, public affairs agencies or in-house public affairs teams. Currently the lobbying industry is self-regulating; organisations devise their own codes of conduct and voluntarily sign up to them if they wish to. The Association of Professional Political Consultants (APPC) is the largest self-regulatory body in Public Affairs with 56 member organisations.

The self-regulating bodies such as the APPC require a register of names of staff and names of clients. They do not require details of services rendered or financial disclosure. Meanwhile, Parliament's register of interests gives details for MP's, Lords or their staff, who have received payment for services rendered. But there is limited information on the detail of their work.

This reform would ensure full disclosure of information with significantly more detail over relationships and the content of meetings. It would also ensure in-house public affairs teams were regulated as the current system only covers multi-client agencies. It would likely require the setting up of a statutory body as recommended by the Public Administration Select Committee. It would need to have robust enforcement and disciplinary powers to be effective.

Arguments in favour

- A clearer and more open account of lobbyists, their clients and their contact with public officials would reduce scope for corrupt activity.
- It would benefit those undertaking legitimate lobbying activities by fostering greater public understanding in the public affairs industry and how it contributes to designing effective legislation.
- It would help to address the 'revolving door' issue (whereby lobbyists and politicians or civil servants interchange jobs) by encouraging greater scrutiny.
- A statutory body would likely be more effective in discipline and enforcement as self-regulators have a vested interest against this.

Issues / arguments against

- A new statutory body would need significant financial resources dedicated to research and information gathering to be effective.
- Greater information disclosure could increase levels of bureaucracy for the industry and it is difficult to identify non-disclosure due to the informal communications channel lobbying occurs within.
- Alone information disclosure might not significantly influence how lobbying actually works, as spending disparities between commercial lobbyists and third sector or citizens group would still exist.
- Enforceability problems could force the problem underground

34. Cap the amount of money that can be donated to any party or candidate by individuals (or total amount)

(7) 

There is currently no limit on the amount that can be donated to a political party in the UK. Donations of over £5000 to main political party offices must be reported to the electoral commission, and donations of over

£200 must be recorded, though not reported.

Large donations play a significant role in funding UK political parties. Donations of over £100,000 make up over half of the money raised. Many other countries have limits on the amounts individuals can donate to a party. For instance the US has a limit of \$30,400, and France €7,500.

The suggested size of the maximum donation to a UK party varies widely. A recent review of political party funding proposed a limit of £50,000, but some have suggested a limit of as low as a few hundred pounds.

"Money corrupts the political process, and not necessarily in a blatantly explicit manner but more obliquely by creating subtle obligations. Big business has only one legal obligation - to its shareholders - and we need to remove undue influence from this area of narrowly focussed interest."

Arguments in favour

- Very large donations give a few wealthy individuals a large amount of political influence. Capping donations would restore public confidence in the funding system.
- A cap on donations would mean parties having to fundraise through lots of smaller contributions. This may lead to more people being engaged in politics, and to political parties being more democratic and tied in with their grassroots
- Donation limits would help arrest the trend of ever-increasing spending by political parties

Issues / arguments against

- With the decline in mass party membership in recent decades, donations from wealthy individuals are now vital to all parties. Banning large contributions would leave a big hole in their budgets.
- People should have the right to support whatever cause they believe in, and to whatever extent.
- A cap on donations might be avoided by going through front companies, friends, relatives etc. This would actually decrease the transparency of the funding process.
- Concerns over buying influence might be alleviated by greater transparency, and tighter regulations on party spending and the honours system, making donation limits unnecessary.

References:

<http://www.fec.gov/pages/brochures/contriblimits.shtml>

<http://www.ambafrance-uk.org/Politics-Political-party-funding.html>

35. Increase the amount of public funding available for parties and candidates

(15) 

Currently political parties in Britain are largely funded by donations from individuals or private organisations, rather than by public money.

The state does provide some direct funding for political parties. Policy Development Grants are offered to enable parties to develop their policies for election manifestos; the opposition parties are also given money to help them carry out their parliamentary business, and to counter the advantages the governing party has.

"Voters get to choose an allocation of public funding for political parties in a separate ballot at election time. These funds would then have to be spent within that constituency."

The state also indirectly assists parties through providing party political broadcasts, and free use of public meeting rooms and postal services during election times.

However, some other countries have a system with caps on donations from individuals and businesses, and a much higher proportion of party funding coming directly from the state. France, for instance, bans donations from businesses, caps the amount individuals can donate, and distributes public money to parties according to the votes they receive and the seats they gain.

Arguments in favour

- Parties would not be so influenced by a few wealthy individuals, or organisations with vested interests.

- Funding could be tied in to incentives; e.g to engage more with communities or to promote local activism
- Parties could spend more time developing policies and engaging with citizens, rather than fundraising
- Other proposed reforms such as limits on individual donations and extra reporting obligations may create extra burdens on parties, even if they are in the public interest. The financial cost of these reforms therefore should be covered by public money.

Issues / arguments against

- Many would object to their tax money funding parties that they do not agree with. This could be particularly controversial if some of the smaller, more radical, parties qualified for funding.
- This could contribute to making British party politics a more 'closed' system, where parties outside of the main three find it increasingly hard to break into the mainstream as they are deprived of state funding.
- European countries such as Italy, France and Germany have a state-funded party system, and still have problems with corruption.

36. Expand the use of open primaries to select party candidates

(21) 

There are currently no binding rules governing how political parties select candidates to compete for election. The three major parties employ different processes but they all share a similar model. Each party leadership creates a list of acceptable potential candidates and the members of the local party have the final say on who will stand.

"This way it would open up politics and parliament to a wider range of people that may have done other professions but now want to serve the public. It would also get rid of the notion of a "safe seat" as all sitting MPs would have to re-elected each term."

Open primaries would take the selection process out of the hands of the central party and the local party members, opening the process to the whole electorate in that constituency. Anybody wishing to vote would help to choose a party's candidate. Current MPs would also be subject to this process and would therefore not be guaranteed to continue as their party's candidate.

There were suggestions that open primaries should be 'introduced', but as they already had been those advocating an 'expansion' seemed more relevant. A range of possible voting systems for primaries were suggested, but 'open primaries' is the core idea.

The Conservatives have recently experimented with open primaries in Bracknell and Totnes. In both constituencies any member of the electorate could participate regardless of party affiliation. Primaries are also a big part of the American electoral process although it must be noted that for the most part these differ from the 'open' primaries being proposed here. In most US primaries voters can participate in *either* the Democrat's *or* the Republican's primary for that electoral ward or state, but not in both.

Arguments in favour

- Increases the likelihood that candidates will be residents in, and active members of, the community which they wish to represent.
- Widens the pool of people who are able to seek office.
- Encourages participation and civic engagement from the wider public.
- Provides a means to challenge an incumbent MP in a safe seat.
- Takes power away from the central party and gives it to the local community.
- Political party membership is at a historical low and will probably continue to decline. Candidates selected by so few people have very little legitimacy. For example, there are on average just 280 Labour Party members in a constituency of approximately 68,000 voters, but they have the power to select the Labour candidate.
- Political parties are currently failing to produce a demographically representative parliament.

Issues / arguments against

- An open primary where all can select candidates regardless of their party affiliation is open to sabotage. Voters may intentionally select a weak candidate for an opposition party in order to harm their chances in the General Election.
- Party membership is already declining and this measure will hasten that decline by removing one of the

- remaining incentives for joining a party.
- Taking power away from the party membership strengthens the hand of the party leadership.
- This measure may decrease the ideological significance of political parties. If everybody can participate in the primaries for all parties they are all likely to end up with similar candidates.
- Political parties are currently experimenting with different ways of making parliament more demographically representative. Introducing open primaries would make this impossible.
- The cost of such a system would be substantial.
- Primaries could increase the influence of money in local politics.
- Open primaries are not necessarily the correct solution to the problems raised above. Closed primaries as operated in America may address current problems without creating as many new ones.

References:

The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Politics, 2003

<http://clients.squareeye.com/uploads/prog/The%20case%20for%20primaries%20to%20select%20Labour%200candidates%20-%20Will%20Straw.pdf>

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2009/oct/20/labour-conservatives-ppc-research>

http://www.parliament.uk/business/speakers_confeence.cfm

37. Make party manifesto promises legally binding

(11) 

Before a General Election each party sets out the measures it wishes to put into practice if it to form the next Government – a manifesto. However, there are no rules ensuring that the victorious party will act on its promises. Governments often fail to implement the very measures for which they were elected. Rules could be introduced which put pressure on politicians to fulfil their promises by penalising parties that do not make good on manifesto pledges. Punishments could come in the form of monetary fines or by removing seats in subsequent elections.

“It is a form of fraud that political parties make all the promises in the world in order to get votes, and then ignore them as soon as they get in, except for some unpleasant ones.”

Whether or not a party has fulfilled its manifesto promises could be determined by a mechanism such as a *citizens' convention*.

Arguments in favour

- Parties often fail to act on their manifesto promises. This leaves the public distrustful of politicians and cynical about the political process.
- If parties knew they would be punished for unfulfilled promises they may restrict themselves to those they know (or genuinely believe) they can achieve. They would not attempt to gain voter support through manifesto pledges which they had no intention of implementing.

Issues / arguments against

- Punishment may stop politicians from taking on big issues which need to be addressed but whose success cannot be guaranteed.
- The process of forming and attempting to implement legislation is difficult and complex. Manifesto pledges go unfulfilled for many different reasons – not just because politicians are dishonest. Punishment is an arbitrary and ineffectual solution to a complex problem.
- Politics is not static, nor are the issues with which it is concerned. Pledges made in a manifesto may be irrelevant or of less importance once a party is in Government. For example, tackling the current economic problems would not have been a part of Labour's last election manifesto.

38. All parties must be democratic

(1) 

Political parties currently set their own rules regarding their internal organisation. Despite differences, the major parties share similar features in that they concentrate power in the hands of their parliamentary group, more specifically in the hands of their leaders, and therefore reduce the influence of the wider membership.

For example, when it comes to choosing a new leader, both the Conservative and Labour Party give disproportionate influence to their MPs. There are three main ways in which political parties could be made democratic:

- by increasing the power of the party membership in the election of leaders;
- in the selection of candidates to stand for Parliament;
- and in formulating policy proposals.

Arguments in favour

- Parties currently concentrate power in the hands of a few at the top.
- Making parties more democratic would increase the legitimacy of their actions when in power.
- If members of the public felt as though they could have real influence over political outcomes by joining political parties they would be more inclined to do so.
- The more people contributing ideas to the political process the more likely that the conclusions reached will have broad appeal.

Issues / arguments against

- The complexity and range of issues with which political parties must deal means that these organisations need to be headed by full-time officials and professional leaders; they need power in order to do their jobs properly.
- The policy preferences of party members can be ideologically driven 'wishful thinking' – they support ideas that cannot be implemented in the real world and are not supported by the wider public.
- Despite their power political parties are not like public bodies in the sense that they are independent of Government and therefore should have some private freedoms as to their composition

References:

Christopher J. Poor, *From Nightmare to Consciousness: Democratising Political Parties*

<http://humanities.otago.ac.nz/.../From%20Nightmare%20to%20Consciousness%20-%20ASA%201999.PDF>

www.parliament.uk/commons/lib/research/.../snpc-01366.pdf

www.parliament.uk/commons/lib/research/.../snpc-03938.pdf

39. Incentivize the parties to better reflect the gender and ethnic make up of the population

(4) 

The current make-up of political parties does not truly represent the diversity of the UK population and the present Parliament is predominantly white, male, middle-aged and middle-class; there is an 80.5% majority of male to female MPs in the Commons whilst there is a minority of MPs of ethnic origin or with a disability.

Some suggested a 50-50 gender balance and/or greater BME (black and ethnic minority) representation.

This reform would create an incentive for parties to diversify their membership to represent the increasingly varied population and aim to increase voter turn out for those currently underrepresented.

Arguments in favour

- In June 2009 Government implemented quotas for future public appointments by 2011, as 50% to be women, 14% to be disabled people and 11% to be people from ethnic minorities.
- This would mean a more representative legislative process and would fundamentally modernise UK politics
- This should increase the voter turnout as a greater proportion of society would feel better represented
- This would help to address policies and issues that may be overlooked in a white male biased political system

Argument/issues against

- It may be difficult for parties to introduce more diversity to the background of their members and candidates.
- Candidates should be selected by merit alone for election

Chapter 4

Europe

What the UK's relationship should be with the European Union is one of the most controversial political issues of the day.

The UK joined the European Economic Community in 1973, a decision which was validated by popular referendum two years later. Since that time the EU has evolved, expanding its powers from economic affairs into political areas formerly under the control of member state Governments. Over the same period the EU has expanded from 9 member states to 27 member states.

Euro-sceptics argue that it is unnecessary and undemocratic for the EU to hold such power. Whilst some argue that we should try and re-negotiate our relationship with the EU, others argue for a total withdrawal. Defenders of the EU argue that the UK economy benefits greatly from membership; they state that in an age of inter-dependence we cannot hope to tackle big issues like international crime, terrorism and climate change without political co-operation.

The reforms in this category propose to address the future of our relationship with the EU in different ways through popular referendums.

Suggestions for reform

- 40. Hold a referendum on Britains membership of the European Union
- 41. Hold a referendum on introducing the Euro



40. Hold a referendum on Britain's membership of the European Union

(123) 

A referendum would allow citizens of the UK to have a say, for the first time since 1975, on whether they want the Government to negotiate withdrawal from the European Union.

"Lets have a referendum about EU membership. I used to be pro-Europe but not any more; too much money is being wasted."

Unlike the demands for *electoral reform*, the referendum – giving people a say – is central to the majority of these ideas. Some called for a referendum on membership of the EU, others for a referendum on the Lisbon Treaty or the Euro. Some others merely demanded immediate withdrawal.

Arguments in favour

- It is costly and bureaucratic: the UK makes a net contribution of around £4 billion a year to the EU (after rebates and grants), which could be spent on other things.
- The EU started as an economic organisation but has expanded its role to cover other areas such as justice, home affairs and foreign policy. It is undemocratic for these decisions to be taken by politicians and unelected bureaucrats in Europe instead of by elected representatives in the UK.
- The free movement of labour has led to an inflow of immigrants from Eastern Europe, which can place a strain on housing and other amenities.
- The UK could retain the benefits of free trade with the EU, even if it left. For example, Norway is not in EU but benefits from EU trade.
- Even those people who support the UK's continued membership should support the democratic right of the people to have a say on whether they want the EU to exercise these powers.

Issues / arguments against

- The UK's net contribution to the EU is relatively small as a percentage of Government spending and the UK has benefitted greatly from inward investment and increased trade (67% of UK trade is with the EU).
- The UK benefits from the free movement of labour and people: immigrants take various undesirable jobs in the labour market and UK citizens are able to travel and work in European countries, without restrictions.
- The EU gives the UK more power and influence on the global stage, for example in trade talks or in negotiations on how to tackle climate change.
- In many ways EU institutions, such as the European Parliament, are more democratic and transparent than the UK and they are accountable to national electorates.
- A referendum would be an unnecessary and costly distraction from more important issues facing the country.

Reference:

http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/d/european_community_finances_2008.pdf

41. Hold a referendum on introducing the Euro

(10) 

The Euro is a single currency arrangement that came into existence in 1999 and is currently in use in 16 of the EU's 27 member states. The currency is also used in five other European countries outside this zone (the Eurozone) and is consequently used daily by some 327 million Europeans.

The member Governments of the Eurozone decided to create a single currency because it would improve their economic performance. Since the Treaty of Lisbon the Euro is the official currency of the EU, although each country has taken its own decision whether or not to join. The Eurozone is the second largest economy in the world.

A referendum on the Euro would allow the UK population to decide whether to join the Eurozone and switch from the pound to the Euro.

Arguments in favour

- Joining the Euro would almost certainly mean better conditions for businesses considering long-term investment in the UK. Currently over 60% of UK exports go to Europe, but a fluctuating exchange rate entails risks for these businesses. Adopting the Euro would remove that risk.
- Prices should fall in the long-term as the Euro will create competitive pressure, as it will be easier to compare prices across borders and shop around for cheaper suppliers.
- It would remove the cost and inconvenience of having to exchange currency when travelling to Europe.

Issues / arguments against

- It would mean the loss of our economic independence in certain important respects. A shared currency means a shared European interest rate set by the European Central Bank (ECB) and limits on the Government's ability to borrow money. The Bank of England will be left with just one vote in the ECB, like all the other central banks in the Eurozone.
- Some people would see the move from Sterling to the Euro as an erosion of British national identity.
- Some features peculiar to the British economy could be affected by the move to the euro. Britons, for example, often have mortgages with variable interest rates, as opposed to Europe's more common fixed interest rates.

References:

<http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2008/02/weodata/weorept.aspx?sy=2008&ey=2008&scsm=1&ssd=1&sort=country&ds=.&br=1&c=163&s=PPPGDP&grp=1&a=1&pr.x=63&pr.y=7>

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/3008201.stm

Chapter 5

Devolution and Local Govt

In a large modern state like the UK, political power is exercised at a number of different levels. The UK Parliament in Westminster is the supreme law-making power and the central institution of the state. However, since 1998, power has been devolved from the UK Parliament to the Scottish Parliament and to the Northern Irish and Welsh Assemblies.

These bodies have powers over education, health and other areas whilst all foreign policy matters and some domestic matters, including the economy and taxation, remain with the UK Parliament. England does not have its own national parliament and is governed from the UK Parliament. Local Government meanwhile is made up of a complex and uneven pattern of local authorities, unelected regional assemblies and Regional Development Agencies.

The reforms in this category look at what powers should be exercised at which level of Government in order to be both democratic and effective. As well as political considerations these ideas inevitably invoke questions of local, regional and national identities and loyalties.

Broadly, the reforms aim to address two issues with the UK's current system of *devolution* and local Government: the fact that too much power is locked up in the centre, especially in England; the irregularities and imbalances in power stemming from the uneven process of devolution that has taken place over the last twelve years.

Devolution

- 42. Hold separate referendums on membership of the Union in England, Scotland and Wales
- 43. Forbid Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish MPs voting on issues only affecting England and Scottish and Northern Irish MPs on matters affecting only England and Wales
- 44. Hold a referendum on establishing an English Parliament
- 45. Hold a referendum on the strongest form of devolution amongst the nations
- 46. Move to a region based federal system of Government

Local Government

- 47. Introduce directly elected mayors into population centres
- 48. Increase the decision making and taxation powers of local Councils
- 49. Increase the salaries of local Councillors
- 50. Select some councillors by lot from the local population
- 51. Allow local people to elect the heads of key services, such as the police.
- 52. Commit to a duty of meaningful public consultation through a deliberative process



42. Hold separate referendums on membership of the Union in England, Scotland and Wales

(7) 

Some people argue that the British state has outgrown its usefulness and that the original nations of the British Isles: England, Scotland and Wales, should now become independent. This could only happen through a referendum.

The United Kingdom is a historical creation. Wales was conquered in the 13th century by the English king Edward I and incorporated into England in the 16th century. This created the legal entity England and Wales. The Kingdom of Great Britain resulted from the political union of England and Scotland with the Acts of Union 1707. In 1801, under a new Act of Union, this kingdom merged with the Kingdom of Ireland to create the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. After the Irish War of Independence, most of Ireland seceded from the Union. Currently the kingdom is named the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

The demand for independence is greatest in Scotland where the Scottish National Party is in power and committed to holding a referendum to leave the UK. In Wales there is a sizeable body of nationalist opinion; Plaid Cymru, the Welsh nationalist party, is currently in coalition with Labour in the Welsh Assembly. The main focus for Welsh Nationalists at present, however, is on gaining more powers for the Welsh Assembly, rather than independence. In England the demand for independence only exists amongst a small minority, though this has been growing in response to what are perceived to be the injustices of the current devolution settlement.

Although there are common issues and arguments, the debate on independence differs in each of the nations of the UK.

Wales	Scotland	England								
<p>Wales was conquered in the 13th century by the English king Edward I, and incorporated into England in the 16th century creating the legal entity England and Wales. Through the centuries that followed, Wales retained its own distinctive language and culture.</p> <p>Devolution of power to Wales began in the 1960s with the creation of the Welsh Office and the appointment of a Secretary of State for Wales. Following a referendum, the National Assembly for Wales was created in 1999. The Assembly has 60 members elected for four year terms.</p> <p>The Assembly has powers to legislate in some areas if it receives the permission of the Secretary of State for Wales and the UK Parliament, and has the power to vary laws passed by Westminster using secondary legislation. The Assembly has very limited powers over taxation.</p> <p>A Yes vote in a referendum on Independence would mean Wales seceding from the UK with the Welsh Assembly assuming full powers over Welsh affairs. Wales would then have the same rights and responsibilities as</p>	<p>The Kingdom of Scotland merged with the Kingdom of England in the treaty of Union of 1707. Scotland retained its own distinctive church, legal system and national culture but for the next three hundred years, Scotland was directly governed by the Parliament of the United Kingdom, at Westminster.</p> <p>This situation came to an end in 1998 with the creation of the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh. The Scottish Parliament has law-making powers over 1 devolved areas which include education, health, agriculture and justice, whilst all foreign policy matters and some domestic matters, including the economy and taxation, remain with the UK Parliament in Westminster.</p> <p>A Yes vote in a referendum on Independence would mean Scotland seceding from the UK with the Scottish Parliament assuming full powers over Scottish affairs.</p> <p>With independence Scotland would have the same rights and responsibilities as other nations.</p>	<p>England does not have its own parliament: it is subject to the jurisdiction of the UK Parliament in Westminster. MPs from non-English countries sitting in the UK Parliament, however, still retain the right to vote on laws that will apply in England and not their own countries.</p> <p>So while non-English MPs may vote (and hold the deciding vote) over matters of English educational policy, for example, English MPs have no equivalent right to vote over Scottish, Welsh or Northern Irish educational policy.</p> <p>Currently, the <i>formula</i> system allocates more money per head to the Scotland and Wales than to England. In 2006-2007 this has been calculated as:</p> <table><tr><td>England</td><td>7,121 per head;</td></tr><tr><td>Scotland</td><td>8,623;</td></tr><tr><td>Wales</td><td>8,139,</td></tr><tr><td>Northern Ireland</td><td>9,385</td></tr></table> <p>A Yes vote in a referendum would mean an end to Englands union with Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.</p>	England	7,121 per head;	Scotland	8,623;	Wales	8,139,	Northern Ireland	9,385
England	7,121 per head;									
Scotland	8,623;									
Wales	8,139,									
Northern Ireland	9,385									

42. Hold separate referendums on membership of the Union in England, Scotland and Wales (pt 2)

	Wales	Scotland	England
arguments in favour	<p>Wales is a nation like any other nation, with its own distinctive history, culture and language. Independence would afford Wales the same £ normal status other nations enjoy by allowing it to decide on its own affairs.</p> <p>Independence would give Wales a voice on the international stage and in the European Union where it would join in negotiations on important global issues, such as climate change and decisions over war and peace.</p>	<p>Scotland is a historic nation with its own distinctive history, culture and institutions. Independence would allow Scotland, like other nations, to decide on its own affairs and not be ruled from outside its borders.</p> <p>Independence would give Scotland a voice on the international stage and in the European Union where it could join in negotiations on important global issues, such as climate change and decisions over war and peace.</p> <p>With control over its own economy and natural resources, including North Sea Oil, an independent Scotland could become a more prosperous nation.</p>	<p>It would end the fundamental unfairness of the current situation in which MPs from Scotland and Wales can vote on English laws that do not apply in their own country while English MPs do not enjoy equivalent rights.</p> <p>Currently, English taxpayers subsidise other areas of the UK. England would have more tax revenue to spend on its own population if it wasn't part of the UK.</p> <p>The British nation is an artificial creation borne out of empire. Independence would allow the English to rediscover England and Englishness.</p>
Issues / arguments against	<p>Independence for Wales would mean the break up of the historic union of England and Wales, which has existed since medieval times. It would spell the end of a country with its own history and traditions.</p> <p>Wales benefits economically from being part of the UK and the status the UK has on the world stage affords Wales the opportunity to influence big decisions it would not otherwise be able to.</p> <p>There are options, short of independence, which would give Welsh people more direct control over their own affairs (one option is for the Welsh Parliament to be given law-making powers and the power to set taxation).</p>	<p>Independence for Scotland would mean the break up of Britain. It would spell the end of a country with its own history and traditions.</p> <p>Scotland benefits from being part of the UK: it benefits financially, in terms of support for its public services and its bailed out banking sector; and politically, from the status the UK has on the world stage and the opportunities this affords Scotland to influence big decisions.</p> <p>There are options, short of independence, which would give the Scottish people more direct control over their own affairs (one option is for the Scottish Parliament to be given more powers, including tax-raising powers).</p>	<p>Independence for England would mean the break up of Britain. It would spell the end of a country with its own history and traditions.</p> <p>Unlike the UK, England could not expect to be a significant player in international affairs. A country with a smaller population and economy would not carry the same influence in international negotiations and in the EU.</p> <p>It would be possible to address the anomalies of the current devolution settlement through measures like English Votes on English Laws or an English Parliament in a federal United Kingdom, without having to take the dramatic step of independence.</p>

43. Forbid Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish MPs from voting in Parliament on matters that affect only England; and Scottish and Northern Irish MPs on matters affecting only England and Wales

(15) 

Currently Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales each have their own parliament or assembly with devolved powers over education, health and other areas.

MPs from these countries sitting in the UK Parliament, however, still retain the right to vote on laws that will apply in England and not their own countries.

So while non-English MPs may vote (and hold the deciding vote) over matters of English educational policy, for example, English MPs have no equivalent right to vote over Scottish, Welsh or Northern Irish educational policy.

"...the British parliament and Government is not directly accountable, and does not feel it needs to be accountable, to the people of England, even in relation to laws and policies that wholly or mainly relate to the territory of England. The democratic will of the people of England is completely distorted and misrepresented by the present British parliament; not only because MPs from Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish constituencies can vote on English bills without being answerable to English voters, but also because the voting system completely traduces English people's preferences: delivering a comfortable majority for Labour in England let alone the whole of the UK at the last election, despite polling fewer votes than the Tories."

A system of English votes on English laws would mean that only those MPs in Westminster representing English constituencies would be permitted to vote on England-only laws.

Arguments in favour

- It prevents laws being passed due to the votes of Northern Irish, Scottish and Welsh MPs who won't be held accountable for how they voted because the laws don't affect their constituents.
- It ends the fundamental unfairness of MPs from one country voting on issues that affect another country whose MPs don't enjoy the equivalent right.
- It gives the English nation a political voice at the national level, which at the moment it does not have.

Issues / arguments against

- The UK Parliament is already dominated by English MPs, who make up over 80% of members; the influence of Northern Irish, Scottish and Welsh MPs is already marginal.
- It could potentially mean that a UK Government which relied on non-English MPs for its majority in Parliament would not have enough votes to pass laws affecting only England. This could create constitutional instability and confusion.
- Often it is not clear what geographical scope a law will have, so there might be a lot of disagreement on which laws are "England only" and therefore only to be voted on by English MPs.

44. Hold a referendum on establishing an English Parliament

(410) 

Currently Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland each have their own parliament or assembly with devolved powers over education, health and other areas. England does not have its own parliament: it is subject to the authority of the UK Parliament in Westminster.

"The restoration of an English Parliament to the 50 million people of England and thus England can stop being the only country in Europe without a national legislature. An English Parliament will mean smaller Government, (cheaper too!) and will give Westminster a new role which will be a very small federal administration dealing with international, defence taxation etc..."

Currently MPs from non-English countries sitting in the UK Parliament have the right to vote on laws that will apply in England and not their own countries. The creation of an English Parliament would end this anomaly and give political and constitutional recognition to England.

It would most likely result in a federal relationship between the nations of the UK in which an English Parliament assumes equivalent powers over certain areas of policy, such as health and education policy, to the Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish bodies. The UK Parliament would then exercise control over 'reserved' matters, such as war and peace, treaties, immigration and economic policy.

Arguments in favour

- It ends the unfairness of the current system in which non-English MPs vote on issues that affect only England with no equivalent right for English MPs.
- It gives England a political voice at the national level, which at the moment it lacks, and would contribute to a renewal of English national identity.
- The creation of an English Parliament would provide an opportunity to completely re-think how politics should work, in particular the powers of the central parliament and its relationship to the people.

Issues / arguments against

- The UK Parliament is already dominated by English MPs, who make up over 80% of members, so the influence of Northern Irish, Scottish and Welsh MPs is marginal as it is.
- The 83% of the UK population in England would dominate any federal union. This might lead the smaller nations of the UK to feel that their concerns aren't represented at a federal level generating resentment and potentially leading to the break up of the UK.
- Devolving power from a body that represents 60 million people to a body that represents 51 million people would do very little to bring power closer to the people.
- It could potentially mean creating another Parliament building with a whole new set of politicians. This would impose an added cost on the taxpayer

45. Hold a referendum on the strongest form of devolution amongst the nations

(50) 

The UK currently has an uneven distribution of powers between the *central Government* in Westminster and the devolved Governments in Scotland and Wales. Scotland and Wales each have their own parliament or assembly with devolved powers over education, health and other areas.

The Scottish Parliament has law-making powers over areas including education, health, agriculture and justice, whilst all foreign policy matters and some domestic matters, including the economy and taxation, remain with the UK Parliament in Westminster.

The Welsh Assembly does not have equivalent law-making powers but has the right to legislate in some areas if it receives the permission of the Secretary of State for Wales and the UK Parliament. It also has the power to vary laws passed by Westminster using secondary legislation.

The Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Assembly have only very limited tax-raising powers. Nearly all of their revenue is received in the form of a grant from the UK Treasury. The level of this grant is determined by a system known as the *Barnett formula* which allocates public expenditure each year in Scotland and Wales in proportion to their population at that time.

Under this proposal referendums would be held in Scotland and Wales to decide whether the people of these nations want their Parliament and Assembly respectively to have further powers and greater financial independence.

Arguments in favour

- More devolution would bring power closer to the people and give the nations power to deal with the problems that affect their citizens in a democratically accountable manner.
- It would give the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly responsibility for raising the revenue they spend through taxation and would therefore end the unfairness of English taxpayers subsidising the other nations of the UK through the Barnett formula.

Issues / arguments against

- By moving power away from the UK Parliament, further devolution will undermine the historic bond that

exists between the nations of England, Scotland and Wales and Northern Ireland and so hasten the break up of the UK.

- The ten years since the creation of the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Assembly has been a period of rapid constitutional change; it is best to let the existing arrangement settle before embarking on further change which may well cause instability and uncertainty.
- If it didn't address the issues of Scottish and Welsh MPs voting on English laws, further devolution would add to the unfairness of the current system as there would be even more "England only" laws that non-English MPs in the UK Parliament had the power to vote on.

46. Move to a region based federal system of Government

(67) 

Federalism is a system in which power is divided between a central governing authority and constituent political units. In Britain the central authority would be a national Government and the constituent political units would be *regional Governments*.

"Federalism works in Australia and Canada. Why not the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland?"

Britain would be divided into regions, for example the North East, the North West, etc. Each region would have its own assembly or Government elected by its constituents. The national Government would be elected by the entire electorate. The national and regional Governments would have their own protected areas of authority. For example, each region might have power over its healthcare and education provision while the national Government would retain authority on the issues deemed relevant to the country as a whole, such as defence policy and international relations.

There are many different variations on the federal form of Government operating in different countries. The United States, Canada, Brazil and Germany are just some of the countries which use forms of federalism.

Arguments in favour

- It is fundamental to any democratic system that Government is receptive to the local demands of citizens and a regional Government may be better equipped to recognise and meet these demands.
- Regional Governments would give a voice to areas distant from Westminster and would therefore challenge the London-centric nature of British politics.
- Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales have their own assemblies or parliaments and these are widely considered successful. Regional Governments could have similar powers over healthcare and education.

Issues / arguments against

- It would be difficult to determine how power should be divided between the national and regional Governments. America has been operating a federal system for over two hundred years but there is still debate about how power should be shared.
- An additional 'layer' of politicians will make people feel as though politics is even further removed from them.
- The additional cost of establishing new parliament buildings and paying for all the new politicians and their staff would be extremely large.
- Evidence suggests that the public do not want regional Governments. New Labour considered introducing regional assemblies in a number of areas in England. One referendum was held on this issue in the North East and 78% voted against the proposal.

References:

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/3979549.stm

47. Introduce directly elected Mayors into population centres

(4) 

In general, cities in the UK have traditionally been run by councils where each councillor is elected to represent a small section of the city. One of these councillors normally takes the role of council leader following a vote of the whole council. These councils have often also had a ceremonial head called the chairman or the Mayor

In 2000 the Local Government Act was introduced allowing the introduction of a directly elected mayoral system where voters themselves elect the Mayor, usually requiring approval by a local referendum in England and Wales. These directly elected mayors share some powers with the council such as drafting the annual budget. From it they assume significant executive powers to implement of policy.

To date there have been 37 referendums on introducing a mayoral system, 12 of which were passed and 25 rejected. Though some of these have been in boroughs of London none have been held in major population centres such as Manchester, Birmingham, Newcastle, Leeds or Sheffield.

Arguments in favour

- A clearer allocation responsibility to one individual who can then be held accountable by the electorate.
- MPs are often criticised for failures to act on local issues which they really have no power over, demonstrating the desire for clear local accountability.
- It is more democratic for power to lie with someone directly voted for by the citizens than indirectly elected by the council

Issues / arguments against

- Where Mayors hold significant powers they create a winner-takes-all system where those supporting a different candidate don't get any representation in the result.
- Having a directly elected Mayor creates the potential for deadlock with the council where they disagree.

48. Increase the decision-making and taxation powers of local Government

(70) 

This proposal aims to strengthen local Government. It means delegating more powers from central Government to local councils and service providers, as well as a reduction in the number of '*quangos*' (a common term for quasi autonomous non-Governmental organisations) with powers relevant to local Government. It would improve the ability of local councils to set policy based on local needs and to raise income locally rather than centrally.

The key question is how services can best be provided at moderate cost to a good level of public satisfaction. When choosing between central and local Government it needs to be demonstrated whether efficiency, effectiveness and accountability are better locally or centrally provided.

This idea would include rebalancing taxation from central to local Government. Options could include the introduction of a local income tax, reforming central Government grants or the business rates going to local councils

Arguments in favour

- Independent reports have found both centralising of powers and the role of quangos excessive and damaging to local democracy. Strengthening local Councils by giving them more powers would help reduce waste of public money and improve democratic accountability.
- The state spends an average of £7,000 per person per annum on health, education and care for the elderly. Just £350 is controlled by the locally elected politicians. Local Councils need the spending powers to go with their requirement to provide local services.
- Local interest and empowerment in politics will improve if local Government has more control over both policy making and budgeting

Issues / arguments against

- The public is not satisfied with the current performance of local Government, and tends to look to the

national Government to intervene to improve things, rather than local Government.

- Quangos are specialists in their field in offering advice. They have been created for a purpose and devolving their powers across local Councils would lose the specialisation and expertise gathered.
- In an environment of recession, substantial economic improvement can only be made at the national level, leaving little space for local Government to build up their own tax-raising powers.

References:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200809/cmselect/cmcomloc/33/33i.pdf>

http://www.isitfair.co.uk/Reports/Grey_Hairs_Rpts.html#CT%20Ref%20Sum

<http://www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk/pa/cm200809/cmselect/cmcomloc/33/3313.htm>

49. Increase the salaries of local councillors

(1) 

This idea involves paying local councillors more in order to generate interest from local people to stand as candidates and improve the overall quality of candidates standing for local election.

Pay for local councillors has long been a subject of contention. As elected representatives they are responsible to the residents of the council area and especially their own ward residents. They work to improve local service provision through management of council officers. They are also expected to contribute to citizen involvement in decision-making and uphold a code of ethics.

Councillors' salaries vary considerably depending on the type of council. District councillors usually receive several thousand pounds for their work whilst county and Borough councillors can receive considerably more, often between £10-20,000. They also receive expense allowances, which can range as high as £10,000 a year.

However, a recent report on council Pay in Scotland found that the low basic allowance currently in place for councillors does little to encourage a broad base of candidate to stand for elections.

This proposal would involve extending the pay review findings of the review in Scotland to Councils across the UK.

Arguments in favour

- Upping the pay would make it more competitive to become a councillor and also attract people who might not otherwise get involved in local democracy.
- Although financial reward is unlikely to be the prime factor which motivates people to stand for election, local Government can only be a realistic option for a wider cross section of the community if there is a reasonable basic salary available.

Issues / arguments against

- Councillors are already receiving big increases in many areas. Without more power and responsibility there would be no point in paying them extra to attract new talent.
- Given the recession, public sector pay freeze and current interest in politicians' income, this measure risks a public backlash which could weaken support for local democracy.

References:

<http://www.woking.gov.uk/council/councillors2/cllrsupport> (example)

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2009/11/12102159/4>

50. Select some councillors by lot from among the local population

(6) 

Currently, local councillors are elected by voters to represent them and take political decisions on their behalf – a system known as representative democracy. This proposal would change the method by which local councillors are selected to the so-called “Athenian” model.

In Athenian democracy, decision-makers were selected randomly by lot (or by ‘sortition’) from the people. The idea was that each citizen had an equal chance of being selected. Since they came from the people

decision-makers were thought to be responsive to the needs of the many and not just a powerful few. Today, we use this system to appoint juries by lot from the electoral register.

If this proposal were introduced it would mean that instead of local councillors being voted for at elections they would be selected at random from the electoral register for fixed terms with everyone having an equal chance of being selected as a local councillor. Those selected would be compensated financially for their work.

Arguments in favour

- A group of local councillors selected at random is statistically more representative of the people – in terms of class, sex, ethnicity, religion etc – and is therefore more likely to represent the interests of the people than one which is elected.
- It is a less corruptible system than elections, which can easily be manipulated by money.
- It would give power to ordinary people, not just the small politically active minority who are motivated to campaign and join political parties.

Issues / arguments against

- Being a local councillor involves making complex decisions over important issues and a system of random selection takes no account of the skills or experience of people who are put into office.
- The system could put in power people with extreme or minority views.
- The process of voting for local councillors creates interest, debate and learning on political issues amongst the public and fosters a sense of community.
- Randomly selected councillors may have no enthusiasm for the role and may consequently not be as good at the job.

51. Allow local people to elect the heads of key services, such as the police

(4) 

Advocates of this reform believe locally electing Police Commissioners and heads of other key services would allow for greater accountability and local priority settling. Currently chiefs of key services are appointed variously by the Home Office, a board of executives or by open advertisement.

Police Chiefs are appointed by the Home Office and are accountable to their local police authority (for example the Metropolitan Police Authority covers London). These authorities have power to pass or veto police budgets and the power to sack police Commissioners.

In the health sector, foundation and primary care trusts (FCTs and PCTs) have a limited consultation process with citizens when appointing the chief executives. After consultation the positions are filled through open advertisement rather than election. Other services appoint heads in a variety of different ways, all with limited democratic participation in the actual appointment process.

The proposal is based on the view that a centralised approach based on uniform service provision is not the best model. The idea would result in locally elected officials responsible for the individual needs of a particular area.

The reform would see a system similar to that in the United States where the choice of Chief Police Commissioners is made by citizens in a democratic vote. It would mean electing either the head of PCTs, FCTs or the board of executives. It would also involve a review of other services which could benefit from this approach.

Arguments in favour

- Electing service heads within the Police and in other key services would ensure that officials concentrate on the issues most affecting local peoples quality of life.
- The current top down, target-driven culture would be replaced by real accountability to the public and a tailored approach to local peoples needs.
- The process of electing key service heads broadens democratic involvement in local services provision and is another means of strengthening participation and rebalancing power in favour of the service users

as opposed to the state.

Issues / arguments against

- It would create pressure for service heads to follow populist policies based on the electoral cycle rather than long term strategy; increasing democratic participation by strengthening accountability to local authorities and citizen panels would be a better way of achieving this reform.
- It threatens excessive political interference in key services.
- Single service elected bodies fragment localised decision making. Given declining turnout in existing elections voter turnout for elections of heads of services could be even lower.

References:

http://www.policyexchange.org.uk/images/publications/pdfs/Partners_in_Crime_-_Nov_09.pdf

http://www.alg.gov.uk/upload/public/attachments/206/Pike_report.pdf

(4) 

52. Commit to a duty of public consultation through a deliberative process

Public consultation is a regulatory process by which the public's input on matters affecting them is sought. Its main goals are in improving the efficiency, transparency and public involvement in large-scale projects or laws and policies.

However, many people feel that current forms of consultation are often inadequate due to a lack of participation. This is exacerbated by public cynicism in the processes involved. Government and public bodies often disregard the majority view in consultations and there is no scope for holding them accountable for doing so.

There are many forms of consultation in use, online and offline. These range from consultations on local issues such as planning or spending on amenities to national consultations like introducing a written constitution and bill of rights. They usually involved a fixed period for feedback followed by a public report and recommendations.

This proposal would model future public consultations using one standardised structure as best practice. The consultations could be constructive using a deliberative event similar to this one or a 'citizen's jury' selected and making decisions in a way similar to juries in criminal proceedings. It is likely the idea would ensure public bodies would be held accountable to a strong standard code of ethics including an undertaking by decision makers to heed the results of the consultation.

Arguments in favour

- Holding consultations through a participatory event with scope for proper debate and an enforceable outcome would restore faith in public consultation processes.
- A deliberative process allows time for people to review competing arguments. This increases the chances that all participants will understand and make an informed decision on the issue, leading to more equitable results.

Issues / arguments against

- Undertaking consultations in this way would become time and cost intensive; they could not be practically applied to all aspects of local democracy, meaning a reduction in the number of consultations undertaken.
- Decisions made on small scale single issue consultations will not involve the policy expertise required to come to a decision that balances the common good with all other considerations (practicality, finance and knock-on implications, etc)

Reference:

<http://www.number10.gov.uk/Page13627>

Chapter 6

Rights and Freedoms

Rights and freedoms are the foundation of democracy. They are crucial for defining and limiting the role of the state. We cannot imagine a genuine democracy without the right to freedom of speech or freedom to protest; rights which allow the Government to be challenged and held to account.

Some people like to think of these freedoms as 'civil liberties'; some like to think of them as 'human rights' – either way they are fundamental to our dignity and to the health of democratic society.

This category contains proposals for how to better defend the rights and freedoms that are so vital to democracy through changes to the constitution. Other proposals recommend changes to the law that would restore specific rights and freedoms lost in recent years as the state has expanded its powers in the name of efficient administration or fighting crime and terrorism.

- 53. Create a written constitution
- 54. Introduce a strong and broad and expanded bill of rights
- 55. Expand the scope of the Freedom of Information Act
- 56. Scrap the National ID scheme and roll back the database state
- 57. Restrict CCTV and other forms of intrusive surveillance
- 58. Introduce compulsory politics lessons into school



There were many views on what rights this constitution ought to contain, including specific references to a Bill of Rights, or how it should be arrived at – but the idea of a written constitution was constant.

The British constitution defines the set of laws and principles under which Britain is governed. This includes the powers and functions of the different branches of the state (the Government, Parliament, judges etc), how they relate to each other and the legal rights and duties we have as citizens.

Unlike most comparable nations Britain has no single constitutional document. It is therefore said to have an 'unwritten', or 'uncodified' constitution. In the absence of a single document, the majority of the British constitution is to be found in a number of sources: acts of parliament, court judgements and treaties, and in conventions that have arisen over the centuries.

The principle at the heart of the British constitution is 'parliamentary sovereignty', according to which Acts of Parliament are the highest source of law in the land. No one Parliament is bound by the decisions of its predecessors, nor can it bind its successors. Effectively, this allows the constitution to be changed by Parliament at will. Recent constitutional developments, however, such as Britain's membership of the EU, which requires that EU law be superior to British law, have called into question whether Parliament is indeed still sovereign.

Many people argue that we need a written constitution in the UK in order to restrain the power of Government and set out in a clear and accessible way the powers of the state and the rights we have as citizens. Many go further and call for a constitution which replaces the sovereignty or control of parliament with that of We, the people.

Such a constitution would usually be 'entrenched', having the protection of a higher or supreme court, which has the power to invalidate any law by Parliament it judges to be incompatible with the constitution. A written constitution could be drawn up by a participative process, involving people from all across the UK coming together. The document they produce could then be put to a referendum for approval.

Arguments in favour

- People in this country often have a very poor understanding of how our political system works and where power lies. A written constitution would set this information out in a clear and accessible way.
- Written constitutions can often be a source of patriotism and allegiance – it could be taught in schools; immigrants who become British citizens could be asked to swear an oath of allegiance to it.
- The process of writing the constitution would provide an opportunity to re-think how our politics works from top to bottom. It could, for example, look at increasing the powers of local Government or the position of our unelected monarch as head of state.
- A written constitution would give much stronger protection to the rights and freedoms we have as citizens – rights that have been undermined in recent years thanks to anti-terror legislation and the expansion in the powers of the state.
- It would restrain the level of power the Government currently has.

Issues / arguments against

- A written constitution would act as a brake on democratic decision-making by parliament. Having unelected judges with the power to question the power of parliament and decide what the law should be is fundamentally at odds with the notion of representative democracy.
- Written constitutions are usually drawn up following some great historical crisis and upheaval, like a war or a revolution. It would make little sense to embark on such an ambitious project during peacetime when there are more important things to concentrate on.
- A written constitution slows down the process of political reform as certain thresholds have to be met before the constitution can be changed. The existing arrangement where Parliament can change the constitution as it wants is far more flexible and allows our constitution to adapt and evolve over time.

54. Introduce a strong and broad Bill of Rights through a meaningful public consultation

(66) 

A bill of rights is a list of rights that a nation believes to be of such value and importance that they deserve special protection – examples include freedom of expression, freedom of religion and the right to a fair trial.

The purpose of a bill of rights is to protect the rights of individual citizens from infringement by the state. In most democracies bills of rights enjoy a special legal status above ordinary law, which means that they cannot easily be changed by politicians.

If an individual believes his or her rights have been violated then they may invoke the bill of rights in court – it is then up to judges to decide whether a particular law or action by the state violates their rights. In certain countries, like the US, judges may invalidate law they judge to be incompatible with the bill of rights.

The UK does not have its own native bill of rights. It does, however, have the Human Rights Act, which contains the rights in the European Convention on Human Rights – this is a document drawn up by the UK along with other European countries following the Second World War.

The Human Rights Act is distinct from the bills of rights other countries have in several important ways. It is not entrenched in a written constitution (as the UK does not have one) and, theoretically, may be changed by Parliament at will. Also, unlike many other bills of rights, the Human Rights Act does not give judges the power to invalidate laws inconsistent with rights (although they may alert the public through a judicial ruling which puts pressure on the Government to change or repeal the law).

Under this proposal the UK would draw up a new bill of rights. This would strengthen and build on existing human rights protection, through a process of participation and consultation with people across the country.

Arguments in favour

- A new bill of rights would strengthen and build on the Human Rights Act; it could include rights which we value as a society, such as the right to trial by jury, and even rights to welfare and public services like the NHS.
- We have seen an erosion of basic rights and freedoms in recent years thanks to anti-terror laws and the steady expansion of the power of the state to intrude into our lives through measures like ID cards. A new bill of rights would help protect and safeguard our rights and privacy and rein back the power of the state.
- A document setting out our rights would provide an important political education for people of the UK. It would spell out for each person in the rights they enjoy here and could even act as a source of patriotism and allegiance, demonstrating to the world what our values are as a society.

Issues / arguments against

- Bills of rights empower judges to make decisions on important political and social issues, which should really be made by elected politicians. In the US, for example, whether or not controversial issues like abortion are legal hinges on the views of nine judges in the Supreme Court. In this way, bills of rights blur the distinction between politics and the law, undermining democratic decision-making.
- We already have a bill of rights which protects our rights – the Human Rights Act – and don't need another one.

55. Expand the scope of the Freedom of Information Act

(3) 

The Freedom of Information Act deals with access to official information from Government bodies like local councils, the NHS, the Police Force and many others. The Act gives the public a general right of access to information held by public authorities via Freedom of Information act (FOI) requests. The Act also requires public authorities to have an approved publication scheme, proactively publishing information rather than just reacting to requests.

This proposal seeks to extend the Freedom of Information Act to cover more or all information held by Government and public bodies. This could potentially include defence, communications among MPs and

MPs accounts. One suggestion is that Government would need permission from judiciary to keep any secrets.

Critics of the current Act argue that too many requests are turned down and that the exemptions are too far reaching. Requests can be denied on the basis of the public interest, national security or under privacy laws, although there is the option to appeal to the Information Commissioner.

Under this proposal, there would be fewer reasons for information being exempted from FOI requests. A future Government would be expected to extend and strengthen the law, building in much stronger penalties for failing to comply. The Information Commissioner would be given greater powers to punish failure to provide information accurately and promptly. There would also be more scope for the Information Commissioner investigating private bodies, particularly those with public sector contracts.

Arguments in favour

- FOI has been groundbreaking in uncovering abuses of power or controversial decisions (there are high profile examples like UK involvement in the rendition of CIA terror suspects and the MP's expenses scandal).
- It empowers citizens by making public bodies more open and transparent.
- Expanding FOI laws would improve adherence to best practice across more public bodies due to increased public scrutiny through FOI requests.

Issues / arguments against

- Freedom of Information (FOI) requests are expensive to administer and any expansion would increase the time and cost spent processing requests.
- FOI requests have an unpredictable demand and place extra pressure on local authorities, taking them away from their day-to-day work.
- Taken out of context FOI requests only provide a limited picture of the decision-making process and are open to cherry picking and false interpretation of information by those with particular agendas.

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56. Scrap the National ID scheme and roll back the database state

(27) 

This proposal would require the Government to drop its plans for a National Identity card (ID card) system. It would also selectively limit or decommission other databases where privacy, rights and freedoms are found to be unduly infringed.

The ID cards system involves collecting your fingerprint as a biometric identifier along with a scanned photo, which is stored in a chip on the ID card. This can be scanned to reveal your identity. The card is part of the National Identity Register (NIR). The NIR involves individual checking and numbering of the population; putting personal details into a register to be disclosed and constantly updated. It involves a widespread scanner and computer terminal network connected to the central database; widespread use of identity verification; and data-sharing between organisations.

The NIR is one example of the 'database state', a description of the dozens of large Government controlled databases used to assist the functioning of the state. Other examples include Contact Point, which holds the data of every child in England and the National DNA database (NDNAD) which holds the data of anyone arrested, irrespective of whether they are charged or convicted.

Under this proposal both the physical ID cards and all of the supporting databases and infrastructure would be scrapped. Other databases such as Contact Point and NDNAD would be reviewed and if appropriate either limited or discontinued after an assessment of legality based on commissioned research and legal opinion as to their legality and cost/benefit to society.

Arguments in favour

- ID cards and the wider database state fundamentally alter the balance of power between the state and citizen. It undermines our civil liberties, giving a wide range of agencies access to personal data.
- Large-scale IT systems are notoriously insecure and the Government has a poor record in protecting people's data – this increases the likelihood of identity theft, fraud and other abuses.
- Fewer than 15% of the public databases have a proper legal basis for any privacy intrusions. Even so, some of them still have operational problems.
- A report by the London School of Economics has estimated the true cost of the scheme at £15 billion – three times the Government estimate. The total cost of IT systems is around £100 billion which could be reduced significantly if some of state databases were decommissioned.

Issues / arguments against

- Some people argue ID cards and the DNA database deter crime and improve our security. They help police, immigration and other security services in their work.
- Some people argue that ID cards protect people from identity fraud and theft and disrupt the use of multiple identities, reducing the threat from crime and terrorism.
- Keeping large databases allow Government to identify citizens needs, provide public services more efficiently, and protect citizens.

References:

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57. Restrict the use of CCTV and intrusive surveillance by both public and private sector bodies

(32) 

This proposal would reduce the amount of state and private sector monitoring via the use of CCTV cameras and other online or offline monitoring technologies. Advocates of this idea believe the individual's right to privacy is being excessively curtailed as they are subjected to increasingly intense forms of surveillance.

The UK has more CCTV cameras per person than anywhere else in the world. The most recent and widely quoted estimate suggests that there are over 4.2 million public facing CCTV cameras now in operation across the UK. Surveillance technology is used by Governments and private organisations to achieve specific ends, such as maintaining public order, crime deterrence, meeting social needs or identifying market trends.

Aside from CCTV cameras other surveillance includes accessing phone and email data. New proposals by the Government under the Intercept Modernisation Programme would require citizen's phone calls, emails, chat rooms and other communications data to be stored and available for access. Other technology recently developed around CCTV allows tracking through facial recognition and automatic number plate recognition.

Under this proposal there would be a planned reduction in the use of CCTV cameras and limitations placed on all techniques used for mass monitoring. Plans for an Intercept Modernisation programme would be scrapped. Decisions involving surveillance via CCTV or other means by both the public sector and private companies would be more heavily scrutinised and the right to privacy would have to be taken into account.

Arguments in favour

- Only one crime in 1000 is solved by CCTV, meaning mass surveillance is not cost or time effective. Millions of police hours going into scanning footage or information for little result.
- Intrusive Surveillance is raising data protection and wider privacy concerns. It intrudes on citizens' everyday lives and is a step towards a big brother state.
- Intrusive Surveillance is prone to both abuse and mission creep and is undermining trust between the public and the state

Issues / arguments against

- CCTV and other forms of mass surveillance are important tools in assisting modern policing. CCTV

- footage has led to high profile convictions
Surveillance, visible and invisible, acts as a deterrent to crime and anti-social behaviour as offenders are aware they are being watched.
- If you have nothing to hide you have nothing to fear. Surveillance, particularly visible forms like CCTV, makes communities feel safer and reduces the fear of crime - a major public concern.

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58. Introduce compulsory politics lessons into schools

(6) 

According to Government statistics young people in the UK under 30 are less likely to vote than other age groups. Advocates of this idea believe that there should be compulsory politics lessons in schools to engage younger people in politics earlier on in their lives.

Currently a number of subjects are compulsorily taught in schools both at Key stage 3 (11-14 year olds) and during GCSE level. 16-18 year olds who continue with education can opt to complete AS and A-Levels, NVQs or Diplomas. There is no compulsory teaching of politics, although citizenship classes teach people about their rights and responsibilities within society.

This proposal would be possible alongside the current plans to raise the school-leaving age. It could also be introduced in the final year of GCSE's. As well as an optional full politics course all pupils would receive one-hour politics lessons into the curriculum at least twice per half term. Lessons could include education about elections and electoral systems of the UK, its political parties, and structures of Government. As well as other factors that can influence politics like the economy and social changes.

Arguments in favour

- Encouraging young people to take part in voting will allow them to become active participants, who take a genuine interest in how the country is run, increasing the likelihood they will vote.
- Research has shown young people are concerned about political issues, particularly international ones, and feel they are not getting the political and economic education they want.

Issues / arguments against

- Teaching another compulsory subject would mean less coverage of other important subjects. Teaching politics can come about through other lessons; history, media studies and geography and citizenship lessons.
- Teaching politics in school risks bringing partisanship into teaching and could cause disputes between school teachers and parents over teaching of controversial issues.

References:

<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/STATBASE/ssdataset.asp?vlnk=5204>

<http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Parents/Schoolslearninganddevelopment/>

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Glossary

Accountability – refers to the state of being accountable; the obligation to bear the consequences for failure to perform as expected. In politics this usually means accountability to voters.

Act (of Parliament) – is a law enacted as primary legislation by Parliament.

Additional member system (AMS) – is a hybrid voting system in which representatives are elected from geographical constituencies, using first-past-the-post, and others are elected under proportional representation, usually from a list drawn up by political parties before an election. The proportional element is included to minimise the distortion inherent in First-Past-The-Post. Voters have two votes under AMS, one for the party and the second for the candidate in a constituency.

The exact proportion of constituency representatives and list representatives varies from country to country; the constituency element usually makes up between 50 and 80 per cent.

The Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly both use this type of voting system.

Alternative vote (AV) – is a voting system, like First-Past-The-Post, used to elect representatives to single-member constituencies, except that rather than simply marking one solitary 'X' on the ballot paper, the voter has the chance to rank the candidates on offer. The voter thus puts a '1' by their first-preference candidate, and can continue, if they wish, to put a '2' by their second-preference, and so on, until they don't care anymore or they run out of names. If a candidate receives a majority of first-preference votes (more people put them as number one than all the rest combined), then they are elected. If no candidate gains a majority on first preferences, then the second-preference votes of the candidate who finished last on the first count are redistributed. This process is repeated until someone gets over 50 per cent. AV is not a proportional system, and can in fact be more *dis*proportional than FPTP.

This system is used in by-elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly.

Alternative vote plus (AV+) – is a voting system invented by the 1998 Independent Commission on the Voting System, commonly known as the Jenkins Commission. AV + is similar to the Additional Member System. Most candidates are elected from single-member constituencies using the Alternative Vote with 15-20% of candidates elected at regional level by voters either choosing their favourite party, or their favourite candidate from the list proposed by their favourite party.

The regional vote would be used to decide how many additional seats each party should get within the region in order to offset some of the disparity caused by single-member constituency elections.

AV + was originally proposed for elections to the UK Parliament but has not been implemented there or anywhere else.

Barnett formula – is a system used by the Treasury to allocate public expenditure in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The system allocates finances based on population (and not need). Any increase (or decrease) each year in public expenditure is distributed evenly across the nations of the UK, in proportion to their population at that time. Expenditure is allocated in the form of a bloc grant allowing the devolved Governments in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland the opportunity to reallocate funds between services to suit their needs. Currently, the system allocates more money per head to the devolved areas than to England, leading for calls for it to be scrapped or reformed.

Bicameral – Refers to a legislature composed of two chambers. The UK Parliament has two chambers, the House of Lords and the House of Commons, and is therefore bicameral.

Bill (A Parliamentary Bill) – is a proposed law presented to Parliament for approval. In the UK Parliament, a bill must be read and debated in the House of Commons and the House of Lords, where it will usually go through a number of revisions, or amendments, before becoming law.

Central Government – refers to the highest level of Government. In the UK this is the Government in Westminster. It has power to make laws for the whole country, in contrast with local Government and devolved Governments in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Citizens' assembly – refers to a special assembly of citizens, usually created by Government, that is representative of the population as a whole and meets to deliberate and decide on important political issues; usually constitutional issues which relate to the governance of the country. In British Columbia, Canada, a

citizens assembly of 160 members selected at random, met to debate and propose changes to the voting system.

Deliberative polling - is a method of public consultation developed by Professor James Fishkin, of Stanford University, in the 1980s. A random, representative sample is first polled on the targeted issues. After this baseline poll, members of the sample are invited to gather at a single place for a weekend in order to discuss the issues. Carefully balanced briefing materials are sent to the participants and are also made publicly available. The participants engage in dialogue with competing experts and political leaders based on questions they develop in small group discussions with trained moderators. After the deliberations, the sample is again asked the original questions. The resulting changes in opinion represent the conclusions the public would reach, if people had opportunity to become more informed and more engaged by the issues. The POWER2010 event on January 9 – January 10. is a deliberative poll designed to produce a shortlist of democratic reforms for the UK.

Democracy – is a political system in which Government is either carried out by the people (direct democracy) or granted to elected representatives (representative democracy). Most democracies today are representative with power being exercised by the people at elections. Democracy has come to imply universal suffrage, competition for office, freedom of speech and the press, and the rule of law.

Direct democracy - is a form of democracy in which Government is carried out directly by the people. It stands in contrast to representative democracy. Many countries that are representative democracies allow for three forms of political action that provide limited direct democracy: initiative, referendum and recall.

Representative democracy - is a form of democracy in which elected representatives represent the people and govern on their behalf. It stands in contrast to direct democracy.

Devolution - refers to the transfer of powers from a central Government to local units. In the UK devolution usually refers to the creation of the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh and Northern Irish Assemblies which exercise powers previously exercised by the central Government in Westminster.

Devolved - refers to a particular power of Government which has undergone devolution.

Electorate - refers to the group of people entitled to vote in an election

Election – refers to the decision-making process by which an electorate chooses an individual to hold public office.

Electoral reform – refers to a change in the electoral system in order to improve how the desires of the electorate are expressed in election results. Amongst other things it can refer to reform of the voting system, eligibility to vote, and how votes are cast.

European Union (EU) – is a collection of 27 states committed to economic and political integration through reducing barriers to trade internally and creating shared political institutions like the European Parliament.

Eurozone – is the name given to the collection of countries who make use of the single European currency, the Euro.

First-Past-the-Post (FPTP) – is the voting system currently used in the UK by which the country is divided into constituencies in which each voter simply casts one vote for one of the candidates running for election in their constituency. The candidate with the most votes wins.

General Elections – are the elections in which MPs are elected to the House of Commons. They take place at least once every five years when the Prime Minister decides to call one. The next General Election must be called by June 2010.

Governance – the system of decision-making processes through which power is exercised in a political body.

Hereditary peer – the Peerage is a system of titles which makes up the British nobility, 700 of which can be carried over from one generation to the next. 92 of these Hereditary Peers now sit in the House of Lords

House of Commons – is the name of the elected lower house of parliament in the UK to which MPs are elected.

House of Lords – is the name of the, predominantly appointed, upper house of parliament in the UK.

Houses of Parliament – is the name given to both the House of Commons and the House of Lords together.

Judiciary – refers to the system of courts responsible for interpreting and applying the law in the UK.

Legislate – is the act of making laws by passing bills through Parliament.

Legislation – is a law which has been passed by Parliament.

Legislature – is an elected assembly with the power to pass laws.

Lobbying – is the act of pressuring elected politicians to adopt a particular position or take a particular action.

Local Government – refers to the level of Government below nation-state level. In the UK it usually refers to elected local councils.

Member of Parliament (MP) – an individual elected to the House of Commons to represent a constituency in the UK.

Northern Ireland Assembly – refers to the devolved legislature of Northern Ireland. The situation in Northern Ireland is unique: devolved arrangements are based on an international treaty between Great Britain and Ireland, the Good Friday Agreement 1998, which helped bring an end to decades of troubles. The Assembly has authority to legislate in areas known as 'transferred matters', such as education, health and agriculture. Powers retained by Westminster are divided into 'excepted matters' which it retains indefinitely (such as immigration and international relations), and 'reserved matters' (such as policing and criminal law), which may be transferred to the Northern Ireland Assembly at a future date.

Parliament – refers to the whole legislature; the collection of bodies with the power to legislate.

Parliament Acts – refers to two laws passed in 1911 and 1949 respectively which assert the power of the House of Commons by limiting the ability of the House of Lords to block legislation passed in the Commons.

Political party – refers to a group of persons organized together to acquire and exercise political power. Parties develop a political programme which defines their ideology and sets out how they would govern should they win elective office.

POWER2010 Pledge – refers to the 5 reforms that the POWER2010 campaign will make the focus of its nationwide campaign for democratic renewal at the next UK General Election. The reforms will be chosen by a public vote on a shortlist produced by the deliberative poll.

Preferendum – is a multi-option referendum.

Prime Minister - is the head of the UK Government. The Prime Minister is the leader of the party that can command a majority in the House of Commons. He or she selects the members of the Government and the Queen confirms their appointment. The current Prime Minister is Gordon Brown, leader of the Labour Party.

Private Members' Bill – a bill introduced into Parliament by back-bench MPs or peers. Little parliamentary time is given to Private Members' Bills and few become law.

Quangoes - spelt out as quasi autonomous non-Governmental organisations, these are organisations which act at arm's length of Government to which Government has allocated power to perform certain public functions. Examples include Jobs Centre Plus, Passenger Focus, the Environment agency, the Homes and Community Agency and the many regional development agencies.

Referendum – refers to the submission of a proposed public measure or actual law to a direct popular vote, usually allowing for a Yes or No answer. Referendums are a form of direct democracy.

Regional Government - is the level of Government below national level which covers a particular geographical area. England currently has a system of regional Government, outside London, that comprises unelected regional assemblies and Regional Development Agencies.

Regulation - refers to a principle, rule, or law imposed by Government to control conduct, usually of a particular institution or the economy.

Recall – is a procedure by which voters can remove an elected official from office through a direct vote, initiated when sufficient voters sign a petition. It is a form of direct democracy. Certain US states, including California, have the right of recall.

Scottish Parliament – refers to the Scottish Parliament created in 1998 following a popular referendum. It has law-making powers over "devolved" areas which include education, health, agriculture and justice, whilst all foreign policy matters and some domestic matters, including the economy and taxation, remain with the UK Parliament in Westminster. It has limited tax-raising powers.

Secondary legislation - refers to laws made by the Government under powers given to it by primary legislation in order to implement the requirements of that primary legislation. In the UK secondary legislation is made by statutory instruments which do not require parliamentary approval.

Select committee – is a committee made up of a small number of parliamentary members appointed to deal with a particular area of policy. Their task is to carry out detailed scrutiny of bills and Government policy and make recommendations.

Self-regulation - is a process whereby an organization monitors its own adherence to legal and ethical standards without any outside monitoring or enforcement of those standards.

Single transferable vote (STV) – is a voting system that uses preferential voting in multi-member constituencies. Each voter gets one vote, which can transfer from their first-preference to their second-preference and so on, as necessary. Candidates don't need a majority of votes to be elected, just a known 'quota', or share of the votes, determined by the size of the electorate and the number of positions to be filled.

If your preferred candidate has no chance of being elected or has enough votes already, your vote is transferred to another candidate in accordance with your instructions

Elections to the Irish Parliament use Single Transferable Vote.

Stakeholder - refers to a person, group, or organisation, affected by a particular project or organisation and therefore with an interest in that particular project or organisation.

Statutory Instrument - is a form of secondary legislation.

Unicameral - refers to a legislature composed of one chamber. New Zealand has a unicameral Parliament.

Welsh Assembly - refers to the National Assembly of Wales created in 1998 following a popular referendum. It has powers to legislate in some areas if it receives the permission of the Secretary of State for Wales and the UK Parliament, and has the power to vary laws passed by Westminster using secondary legislation. The Assembly has only very limited powers over taxation.



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