

Members

Unlock Democracy has over four thousand members, with a big boost coming from our call for fairer votes after the election.

This year we've been working harder than ever to engage with our members — we've built a new, more user-friendly website, we've introduced a monthly membership email newsletter to keep you updated on how our campaigns are progressing, and we've made it easier to renew your membership.

We asked you what you want from your membership, sending surveys to keep in touch with your thoughts on our campaigns and how we communicate with them.

We continue to support our thriving local groups. This summer we helped local activists organise Pankhurst Picnics across the country. Honouring the Pankhursts' contribution to reform, these picnics are a light hearted way to bring our local supporters together to chew over the most pressing issues facing our democracy.



Local Works

Thanks to funding from the Andrew Wainwright Reform Trust, Local Works has spent the last year helping town and parish councils use the bottom-up democracy process of the Sustainable Communities Act. The very first proposal submitted by a parish council was accepted!

We've held 14 meetings with councillors and clerks across the country exploring ideas for improving their communities.

Proposals included:

- reforming planning processes
- the right to retain a portion of local taxes
- allowing 16-17 year olds to vote in local town council elections
- the power to create a war memorial
- removing the duty for councils to pay rates on public amenities

We have also helped Patchway Town Council gather local views on their renewable electricity proposal, which was supported by over 100 local councils, 12 associations of local councils and 10 national charities.



campaigning for democratic reform

Almost half a million people and five party leaders signed our petition for a fairer voting system.

Over 1.1 million people used Vote Match, the UK's most popular voter advice app

We held 12 public meetings across the country from prisons to Parliament to draft a 21st century Magna Carta

Local Works helped Patchway Council get the support of 100 local councils for its Sustainable Communities Act proposal on renewable energy

Finance

Income from 1st April 2014 to 31st March 2015



Legacies

We are grateful for the support of members who left us a legacy in their will in recent years.

We received legacies in this financial year, of £14,700 from J M Dent; £40,400 from Norman Arnold & £1000 from Professor Klopfer.

If you would like more information about legacies please contact our office.

Grants

In the 2014/2015 financial year, we gratefully received £76,427 in grants.

We would like to thank Heritage Lottery Fund, Esmee Fairbairn Foundation, The Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust, European Union's Grundtvig Programme, Andrew Wainwright Trust, and Millfield House Foundation for their kind support of our work in 2014/2015.

Expenditure

We spent approximately £363,076 in 2014/2015. The full audited accounts will be available in November 2015 in an independent report by our new auditors, Berley Chartered Accountants.

We extend our heartfelt thanks for this year's vital contributions to our fight for a fairer democracy. Whatever the donation, £5 or £5,000, we are extremely grateful for all your support.

Owned and run by our members. Together we campaign to build a better democracy, reconnecting politics with ordinary people. Join us.

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Unlock Democracy

At Unlock Democracy, we don't just campaign for radical change in our political system. We also strive to change our political culture and increase participation in politics at every level.

Unlock Magna Carta took the debate on the rights and freedoms we need today nationwide. We built a new Vote Match app to help undecided voters find their political match at the election. We mapped out a voter's eye view of the election campaign. And of course, we've been campaigning for a fairer voting system, a constitutional convention, and other fundamental changes to our democracy.

In the coming year, we will tackle the underlying problems of our political system, including the role that big money plays in our politics. We are seeing more and more people looking for ways to achieve meaningful change. We aim to mobilise that energy to fight for a healthier, stronger democracy.

Together we can show what a better politics could look like.

Follow the Money

The UK lobbying register came into force this year, but as we predicted, it covers only a tiny fraction of lobbying activity. Just 80 organisations have registered as lobbyists, a drop in the ocean of the UK's £2bn lobbying industry. Our goal is to improve and expand the existing register to pave the way for a comprehensive register of lobbying activity.

Vote Match

With over 1.1 million users, Vote Match 2015 was once again the UK's most popular voter advice app at the general election. Vote Match is a simple quiz designed to help first-time voters to the ballot box by showing them which party is closest to them on the issues that matter to them.



Vote Match was launched in partnership with LSE, 38 Degrees and the Telegraph, and featured on the BBC, Guardian, Metro, Huffington Post and other media outlets. Vote Match was produced with the help of an independent Advisory Board who were essential to the project's success.

Vote Match users said our newly designed app was easy to use, had relevant issues, and one in four said it made them more likely to vote. Since we launched back in 2008, voter advice apps have become much more common, but Vote Match has stayed ahead of the pack!

Election Watch

What politicians say and do to win your vote matters. That's why we monitor the election campaign, to find out how they reach you, what they do to try and convince you and the promises they make.

We scrutinised this year's General Election with ElectionLeaflets.org, the only public crowdsourced database of election leaflets. Together our supporters found, snapped and archived over 4000 leaflets. Our analysis of the leaflets was regularly featured in the national media, including the Telegraph, Mirror, Daily Mail and Independent.

Over 1000 people took part in the What The Voters Saw project - a series of surveys about your experience of the election. Your insights fed into a report giving a voter's eye view of the election, available on our website.



Voting Reform

In May, our voting system delivered the most disproportionate election result ever - the seats don't match the votes. The morning after the result, we launched a petition for a fairer voting system in partnership with the Electoral Reform Society and other campaigners.

In just two weeks almost half a million people signed our petition for fairer votes. We took the petition to Number 10 with the support of a rainbow coalition of five political parties: the Liberal Democrats, SNP, Plaid, UKip and the Greens.



After a disappointing response from the government, we're taking the fight for fairer votes beyond Westminster. We've launched a campaign to get local councils to demand the power to change the voting system for local elections.

Big party donors are 200 times more likely to get a peerage than ordinary party members

After years of campaigning, the Scottish government has published proposals for their own lobbying register. Scotland has the chance to create a truly comprehensive register which will make lobbying transparent to the public. We are working with transparency campaigners in Scotland to make sure they don't waste this opportunity.

In partnership with Spinwatch, we launched the Under the Influence website, which aims to be a one stop shop for data on money in politics. Under the Influence will help transparency campaigners find links between politicians, big donors and the influence they wield. We've already used Under the Influence to write reports revealing the secrets of different sectors of the lobbying industry. We'll be producing guides on how activists and campaigns can use Under the Influence to uncover the lobbying that influences policy on their campaign issues.

Magna Carta



This year, 800 years on from the sealing of Magna Carta, UK citizens have been working on an upgrade. Over the last 12 months, we've been on the road, travelling all over the country to create a modern Charter, written by British citizens in 2015.

We've held seminars, workshops, public debates, democratic roundtables, theatre performances and arts exhibitions. We've entered into debate with citizens from across the UK - sixth form students, adult learners, refugees, MPs, academics and prisoners. We've teamed up with organisations as varied as the Workers' Educational Association, Speaker's Corner, Theatre in Prisons and Probation, the Crick Centre, Cambridge Commons and many more...

For each event, we worked with local organisations to determine the best topic and format for their area. This not only led to a wide and diverse debate, but gave partners and participants the chance to take a lead on setting content for the debate.

Strong differences of opinion made for stimulating debate, but there was also universal respect for the principles of public dialogue, and a real appetite for democratic discussion. One of the most frequently heard demands was for more ways to engage with fellow citizens and representatives to discuss important political issues.

Views also converged around certain themes: greater devolved powers, a more proportional electoral system, the need to protect public ownership and better access to political and judicial institutions. These clauses were drafted, voted in and finally concretised, forming part of the final Charter, which is publicly available online. Our Unlock Magna Carta documentary has helped to chart the development of the project, and will allow many more people to witness and join the debate in the future.

But Unlocking Magna Carta isn't finished yet: the momentum of the series will be carried forward in the form of the People's Charter, which will give a focus to our current and future campaigning work. The document is the product of hundreds of conversations conducted over many months. But, as the history of the Great Charter itself proves, progress towards a stronger democracy demands direction, which comes from people-led politics.



Constitutional Convention

After the referendum on Scottish independence, the government decided it would come up with proposals for more powers for Scotland and English Votes for English Laws behind closed doors. Working in partnership with Electoral Reform Society, we made the case that citizens across the UK should have their say. 15,000 people signed our petition for a citizen-led constitutional convention to decide how the different parts of our country should be governed.



Local Unlock Democracy groups organised the Northern Citizens' Convention, bringing together civil society groups to promote a conversation about how the people of Northern England wish to be governed in 21st century Britain.

