

**UNLOCK**  
DEMOCRACY

**For a**  
**vibrant,**  
**inclusive**  
**democracy**



**Annual Report**  
**2022**



# From the Chair and Director

The last year has been a tough year for politics, with trust at record low levels, following the breaches of lobbying rules by Owen Paterson, Covid rule-breaking by the now former Prime Minister and seriously inappropriate (in some cases criminal) behaviour by a number of MPs.

**On the plus side, it has really galvanised our allies.** The last 12 months or so have seen a period of sustained growth for Unlock Democracy. We have doubled the number of our supporters and increased our membership by nearly a third since April 2021. More members and supporters means more letters going to MPs, Peers and local newspapers and more pressure exerted on the Government.

With Covid receding, we have been able to do more in person lobbying of Parliamentarians over bills such as the Elections and Police Bills. We did secure some victories in the Lords but unfortunately these were overturned in the Commons.

**On the Elections Bill we were right to pursue**

**our campaign.** The Government's own Infrastructure and Projects Authority has given the project the thumbs down and a red rating, stating that 'Successful delivery of the project appears to be unachievable.'

Partnership working continues apace with our closest collaborators: Compass, Make Votes Matter, ERS and Fairvote. This is something that our supporters value greatly.

**With a strong and stable financial base and committed members and supporters, we look forward to another year of campaigning for the democratic reforms that could transform the UK.**

Best wishes,



**Tom Brake,  
Director**



**Jessica Metheringham,  
Chair**

# New Council Elected

In June 2022, our brand new Council took their seats.

**All will serve a two year term, steering Unlock Democracy through whatever those years bring.**

The Council meets around 4 times each year, and any member of Unlock Democracy can stand for Council.

## **A warm welcome to our Council for 2022-2024:**

- ▶ Vicky Seddon
- ▶ Peter Hirst
- ▶ Jacob Webb
- ▶ Catherine Bearder
- ▶ Jess Metheringham
- ▶ Antony Frost
- ▶ Stuart Hill
- ▶ Stephen Carter
- ▶ Stephen Gosling
- ▶ Jane Reed
- ▶ Maggie Nelmes
- ▶ Luke Williams
- ▶ Rumi



# Event Highlights

It's been another great year for events at Unlock Democracy.

Our members and supporters have turned out in force to listen to the likes of:

- ▶ **Kunle Olulode**, Director, Voice4Change England
- ▶ **Zack Polanski**, Green Party London Assembly Member
- ▶ **Cat Smith MP**
- ▶ **Dr Hannah White**, Acting Director of the Institute for Government
- ▶ **Matteo Bergamini**, Founder and CEO of Shout Out UK
- ▶ **Fleur Anderson MP**
- ▶ **Zack Polanski**, Green Party London Assembly Member
- ▶ **Stephen Kinnock MP**
- ▶ **Nan Sloane**, author of Uncontrollable Women
- ▶ And many more...

To find out more about future events, visit [www.unlockdemocracy.org.uk/our-events](http://www.unlockdemocracy.org.uk/our-events)



# Current Campaigns



# Restore Trust in Politics

We've had enough of the law-breaking, sleaze, and cronyism that have become the norm in Westminster politics.

So have the people - **our latest polling shows that just 1 in 7 think that the political system is working for them.**

For the United Kingdom to be a strong and successful democracy, the citizens need to have trust and faith in our political system.

That's not the case right now.

**Tackling the sleaze, cronyism and rule-breaking that's dragged our politics through the mud is a vital first step to restoring trust.**

That's why we are calling on our new Prime Minister, Liz

Truss, to immediately:

- ▶ Commit her Government to **obeying international law** and keeping the UK's treaty obligations
- ▶ Appoint an **independent Ethics Advisor** with real powers to tackle sleaze
- ▶ **End cronyism** in appointments to the House of Lords and other public bodies
- ▶ Restrict MPs' 2nd jobs to **prevent more scandals** - something her predecessor rolled back on earlier this year
- ▶ Instruct the Ministry Of Justice to start work on building a **Written Constitution** to restore order and trust to our politics

Find out more at:

<https://unlockdemocracy.org.uk/our-politics-needs-a-fresh-start>



# Powering Up Politics

## Our political system isn't working

**Trust in politics has been driven down to record lows by sleaze, cronyism and a culture of 'one rule for them and another one for the rest of us'.**

Most damaging of all is the failure to tackle big issues facing ordinary citizens.

Political debate often slips into shouting matches, false claims and stokes yet more division in our society.

Over 15 million UK citizens have opted out of the political process by either not registering to vote, or choosing not to vote.

**That's why we've teamed up with Compass to build a broad coalition and consensus for democratic reform.**

**We've got 4 simple demands that will change how politics works, so we can create a better society for everyone.**

- ▶ Change the culture of Westminster politics - **tackle sleaze, cronyism, dishonesty, lobbying and dark money in our politics.** Make sure the politicians play by the same rules as everyone else.
- ▶ A **proportional representation** voting system - and a Parliament that is truly representative of the people.
- ▶ Reform the House of Lords - with those setting our laws **accountable to the people.**
- ▶ Devolve power - away from Westminster to all levels of government, giving **local communities greater input into key decisions** through Citizens' Assemblies.

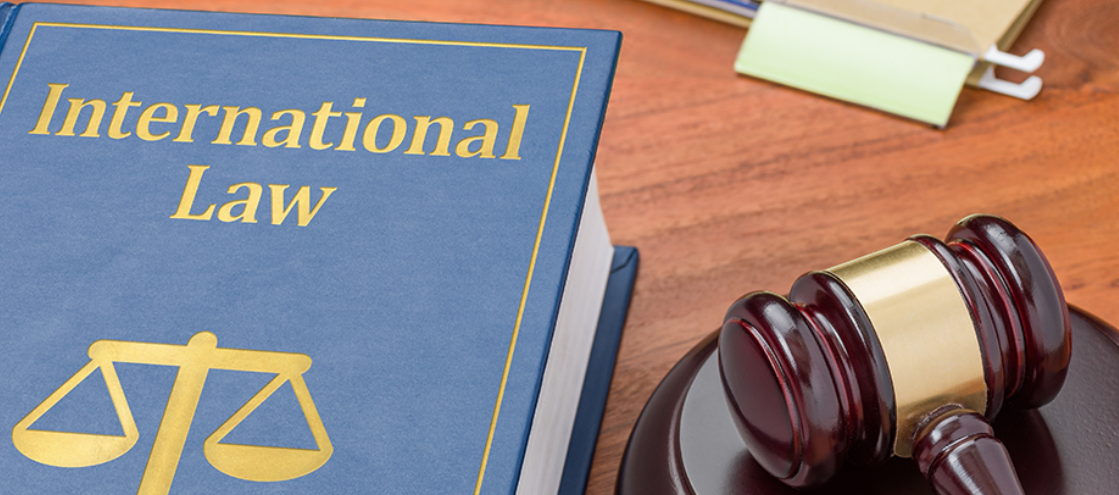
Find out more at:

<https://unlockdemocracy.org.uk/fresh-start>



## Our impact so far

- A **series of publications** making the argument for democratic reform as an electoral asset
- Influential polling on the state of democracy, **which lead to a major report** published by IPPR, *The Road to Renewal*
  - **Uniting our allies** behind our campaign
  - Events at **all the major party conferences**



## Publish the legal advice

The government wants to unilaterally change the deal it struck with the EU over Northern Ireland.

Most legal experts have said that the new legislation is a clear breach of international law.

**The Government claims their plans are compliant with international law, but they are refusing to publish the legal advice. Why?**

We are calling on the Government to show us that the United Kingdom is not breaking international law.

If you agree, find out how to back this campaign at [www.unlockdemocracy.org.uk/ruleoflaw](http://www.unlockdemocracy.org.uk/ruleoflaw)

## Act Now on MPs' Second Jobs

Trust in our politics is at an all time low - and that was before the former Prime Minister quietly ditched his pledge to restrict MPs' 2nd jobs.

That pledge was made in response to the latest in a long line of lobbying scandals involving MPs and their 2nd jobs.

**The fact is that UK Parliamentary rules on 2nd jobs are outdated and are open to abuse - it's time to fix that.**

That's why we are calling for new limits on MPs' second jobs.

Read more about our proposals at [www.unlockdemocracy.org.uk/restrict-mps-2nd-jobs](http://www.unlockdemocracy.org.uk/restrict-mps-2nd-jobs)



# Past Campaigns



## Opposing the Elections Bill

**Fighting the Elections Bill was a key campaign priority in 2021-22**

**This legislation threatens the independence of the Electoral Commission, and makes our elections less accessible and less democratic.**

Our members and supporters heard the call and backed us all the way.

### **Some highlights of what we achieved together:**

- **Our most popular petition yet**, delivered to the desk of Lord True.
- Speaking at the Elections Bill Rally in Parliament Square alongside allies and friends
- Hosting the Elections Bill Summit - **our biggest event to date** - with experts in the fight against the bill joining us to brief members and supporters
- Reaching **thousands of new supporters** on social media
- Influencing the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee's report on the Bill.
- Briefing opposition MPs on the Bill, and how best to oppose it.
- Helping our supporters send **over 1000 letters** to their



local MPs, local newspapers, and peers.

- Winning **some major victories in the House of Lords**. Peers of all parties struck down the government's plans for photo ID and The Electoral Commission, before being overruled by the Commons.

## Stronger Together

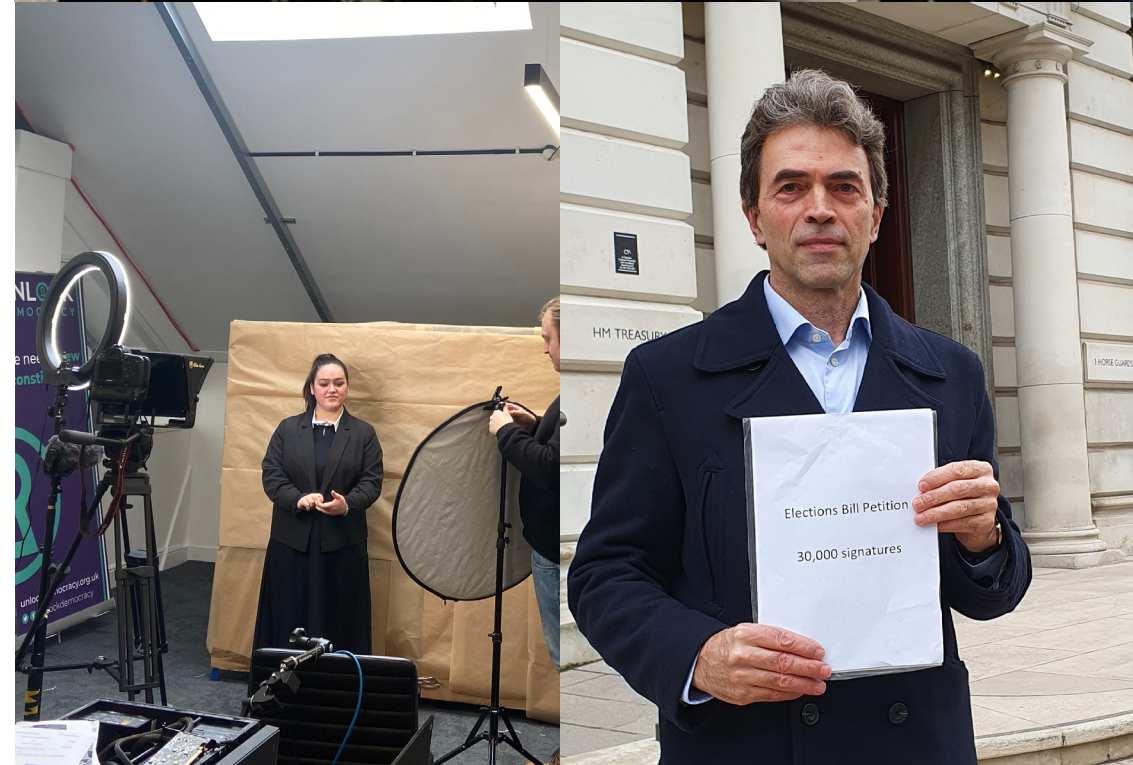
We consistently hear that our members and supporters want us to **work more closely with other pro democracy organisations**. We listened, and took action.

- As a lead member of the Democracy Defence Coalition, **we've laid the foundations of strong working relationships across the sector**.
- We worked with Shout Out UK to **educate young people** about photo ID and the right to vote.
- We got speakers from ERS, Voice 4 Change England, Shout Out UK, and the Labour front bench at our Elections Bill Summit to present **an informative and exhaustive briefing to our supporters**.

## What happened?

Despite some major victories in the Lords, the Bill was rammed through Parliament at the end of April 2022.

This was a bitter blow at the end of a hard-fought campaign. **But as a sector and an organisation, we are stronger than ever, and we'll take everything we learned with us to the next fight.**



# Against the Police & Crime Bill

The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill was designed to outlaw any protests deemed noisy or annoying.

**We were proud to stand alongside the likes of Liberty and Amnesty International in opposition to the Bill.**

We secured some massive defeats in the Lords, with 14 amendments being struck down. **This led to some of the most draconian measures in the Bill being removed.**

## What next?

We will maintain the strong relationships we now have with Liberty and other organisations to keep defending the right to protest.



# Democratise to Decarbonise

Despite overwhelming public support for action, our outdated and unresponsive political system is stalling on the climate crisis. We need Proportional Representation to modernise our politics.

At COP 26 last October, we teamed up with Compass, Make Votes Matter, ERS, and the Sortition Foundation to demand Proportional Representation for the good of the planet.

**Our supporters came out in force with banners and placards, to the rallies in London and Glasgow.**

# A Victory for Human Rights!

We worked with a coalition of 150 organisations to protect the Human Rights Act against government plans to scrap it.

**In September 2022, the new Prime Minister announced plans to replace the Act have been shelved.**

It's too early to say whether this is a change of heart or a change of tactics, but we fear it is likely to be the latter.

We will be keeping a close eye on what the Government is saying on this important issue, and **will be ready for the next stage of our fight to protect our human rights.**

Read about all our closed campaigns at  
[www.unlockdemocracy.org.uk/closed-campaigns](http://www.unlockdemocracy.org.uk/closed-campaigns)

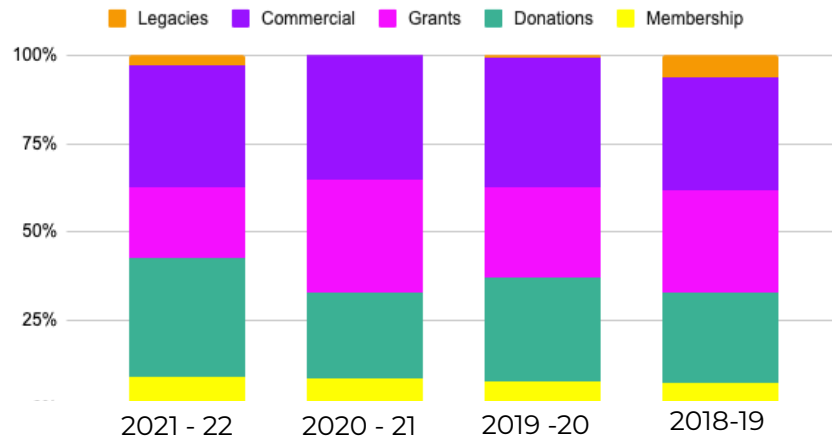
# Finance Summary

We are enormously grateful to everyone who has contributed financially to Unlock Democracy.

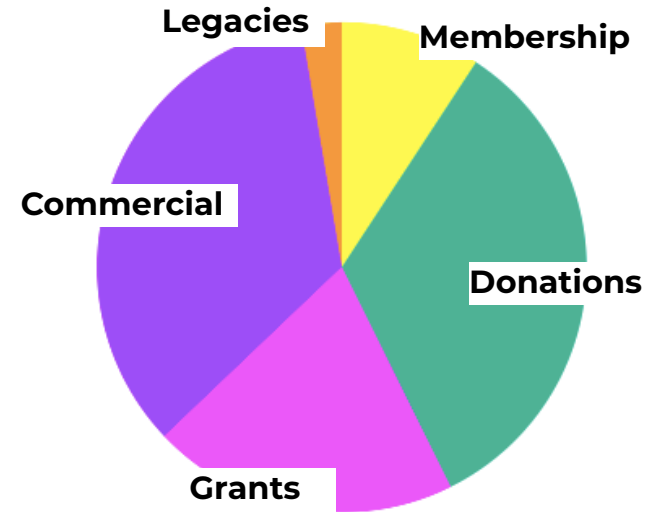
**Your membership fees and donations amount to £171,000 for the year from April 2021 to March 2022, and are key to keeping us running as an independent voice for democracy.**

Unlock Democracy is also supported by income from our subsidiary property company, Rodell Properties. Rodell owns and manages two properties in Central London.

## Proportion of income received from each source, by year



## Breakdown of income for Financial Year 2021-22



<b>Membership</b>	<b>£37,000</b>
<b>Donations</b>	<b>£134,000</b>
<b>Grants</b>	<b>£81,000</b>
<b>Commercial</b>	<b>£138,000</b>
<b>Legacies</b>	<b>£10,700</b>

## Trusts and Individual Donors

**We are very grateful to the trusts and grant funders who provide support for specific projects.**

We'd particularly like to thank the Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust, and the Network For Social Change, for their generous support for our work.

Thanks also to Stephen Gosling and Clare Stevens for large individual donations made to Unlock Democracy this year.

## Legacies

Sometimes our supporters choose to remember Unlock Democracy in their will.

**This is a particularly meaningful way to help in the fight for our democracy, and to protect it for future generations.**

This year, we received a generous legacy donation of £10,720 which has boosted our campaigning on MPs' Second Jobs, and our drive for political parties to embrace democratic reforms in their manifestos.

## Full Financial Report

**The full, audited accounts for Unlock Democracy's financial year 2021-2022 will be available in November 2022, in an independent report by our auditors.**



# Unlock Democracy Annual Report 2022

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