

DEMOCRACY2015

people politics not party politics

Welcome to your first Democracy 2015 newsletter.

This is the first of a series of newsletters that will update you on our progress and the many ways in which you can get involved with the Democracy 2015 campaign.

Dear reader,

Since the campaign was launched on Tuesday 4 September in *The Independent*, we have been overwhelmed by your responses to Andreas Whittam Smith's articles. The enthusiasm from those who have got in touch has been inspirational, your messages convincing us that the commonly held view, that the British public have become politically apathetic, is false. You have expressed not just your frustration and anger with the political status quo, but have also demonstrated a belief and determination that will be essential in creating a viable alternative.

A word from Andreas Whittam Smith:

Dear Supporter,

Thank you for indicating your support for Democracy 2015. The adventure has started - an adventure because none of us knows exactly how we shall reach our objective. We have to plan every next step because nothing is given, nothing happens automatically and we have never done this before. 'We', by the way, is nearly 30 volunteers, all recent graduates, an equal number of men and women. This letter is an account of what has happened since 4 September, the day Democracy 2015 was launched.



Who you are & what you've said to us:

You range from enthusiastic A-level students to pensioners concerned about the future, and you have made your voices heard on almost every issue relating to British politics: from general dissatisfaction with our broken political system, to providing your ideas for addressing specific policy areas.

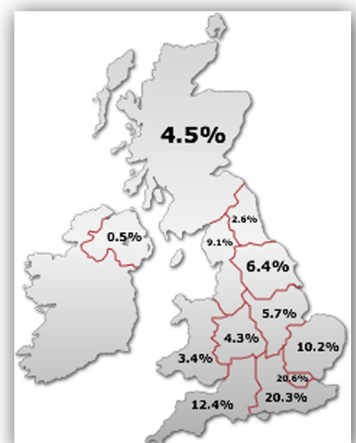
Education, healthcare, taxation, banking regulation and electoral reform have emerged as the most important issues. As such, we have initiated debates on each of these topics in our Facebook group to provide a fledgling platform for discussion. Our supporters are scattered across the length and breadth of the UK: some of you have registered support just two minutes from our

London office, others have written from the furthest tip of Scotland's Isle of Skye. In terms of occupation, supporters range from financial consultants to pig farmers, B&B owners to university lecturers. But despite this staggering diversity, we have found throughout our data analysis that

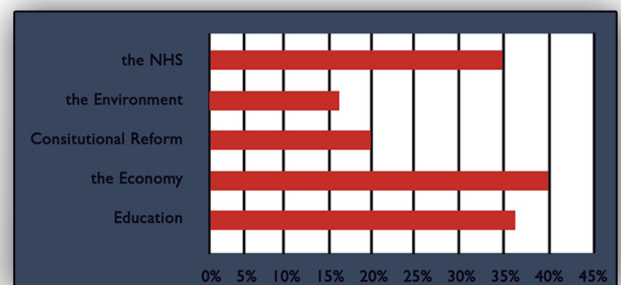


Some of the D2015 team

only 23% of respondents so far have been female, as well as that the majority live and work in London and the South-East. We are working to address this imbalance and hope that our grassroots campaigning will eventually promote much wider participation in Democracy 2015.



Below: an expression of the 5 most popular policy areas mentioned by our respondents as a percentage



"I think the biggest problem with modern politicians is they are too deeply in the system to be able to see things objectively." – Steve, Wiltshire

"A development such as Democracy 2015 is urgently needed in the UK, and I believe it could form a route forward for the country." – Shaun, Nottingham

"I have been wondering for years how I could make a difference, help build a fairer society. Now, at last, a glimmer of hope!" – Peter, Devon

"I feel that politics and politicians no longer engage or represent the views and aspirations of the common people and a change is needed." – Paul, London

Online response - social media, blogs & *The Independent*.

Our intention is to open up lines of public debate spanning all issues and to reach every voter without prohibition or prejudice. To this end, we have been promoting initial discussion through our social media outlets, so far involving regular Twitter, Facebook and *Independent* updates. At the time of writing, our Twitter page has around 900 followers, many of whom engaged enthusiastically this week with a mini-campaign entitled #DefineDemocracy. We asked our followers to describe what democracy means to them in 140 characters and were impressed with the scope and quality of responses. One great definition was quoted by Andreas in his update in *The Independent* on 11 September:

"Democracy, like freedom, is double-edged, but we must not be afraid to make it work. Honest representation, for good or ill."

Our Facebook page has reached over 20,000 people online so far, and has proved to be one of the liveliest platforms for public discussion since the launch. Our official campaign video, put together by a small group of the volunteer team, went live on the D2015 YouTube channel last week and has so far received over 1,500 views. Soon after, we released the first of many video diary updates, which we will be uploading throughout the campaign. These quick video updates will work in

tandem with the newsletter to let you know exactly what is happening week by week, providing an insight into the inner-workings of our decision-making, strategy, and the team itself. We should also mention that Democracy 2015 has sparked a flurry of praise as well as criticism amongst online blogs and articles (see below). We have taken note of these arguments and responded to the comments made, and have also made arrangements to meet with several of the authors over the coming weeks.

The next steps.

Website:

The Democracy 2015 website, while housing our FAQs, a message board and our new blog, is currently under construction. Much of our information and content is hosted on *The Independent's* website for the moment, upon which we gained an exciting new platform for debate this weekend with the launch of the innovative *Independent Voices*. We encourage you to log on there and find out more. Links can be found at the end of this newsletter.

Policy groups and local activism:

Crucial to the progression of the movement is the establishment of regional Democracy 2015 groups across the UK. This forms the next stage of the campaign, but we cannot make a start until we have collated and analysed all the responses received from you so far. Currently, policy development is being

initiated on social media and will move to an interactive forum on our website in time.

Donations:

For the time being, the Democracy 2015 team is unpaid and the office space we use in central London, kindly provided by the University of Westminster, is free. But this fortunate situation cannot last indefinitely, so we shall need to start raising funds for necessary expenses if we are to keep the momentum going. We asked potential supporters if they would endorse the principle of making a small contribution from time to time at the maximum amount of £50, and almost without exception the response has been 'yes'. So, we are about to launch an appeal for donations. In describing the arrangements we shall aim to achieve total transparency, and we shall regularly report how much money Democracy 2015 has received and how it has been spent. Details coming shortly.

Spread the word:

Thank you for all of your support so far. It is your responses and your concerns that have been the basis of our work for the past two weeks and we hope that participation in Democracy 2015

will continue to grow as events are hosted in local areas and our policy discussion is initiated. The more people we get involved in the campaign, the better we can harness the public desire for change that we know is out there. So please help us spread the message of Democracy 2015 in any way you can: by word of mouth, email, on Twitter or through Facebook.

Let's start afresh and work together for people politics, not party politics.

Yours,

The Democracy 2015 volunteer team



Events:

Democracy 2015's first meeting is now confirmed: it will be a round table discussion on the aims and direction of the movement. We're going to invite speakers and a chair to engage in a debate, with the issues and speakers to be revealed soon. In the meantime, the details are:

MANCHESTER

People's History Museum
Left Bank Cafe
Bridge Street
Spinningfields
Manchester
M3 3ER

15th October 6-8pm.

We are currently in the process of confirming locations for meetings in London and Birmingham, details of which will be announced very soon.

Visit:

www.independent.co.uk/democracy2015

www.facebook.com/democracy2015

www.twitter.com/democracy2015

www.youtube.com/democracy2015

www.democracy2015.co.uk

email:

democracy2015@independent.co.uk

Links to blogs written about Democracy 2015:

www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/john-coventry/politics-has-a-boos-problem_b_1860971.html

www.opendemocracy.net/ourkingdom/niki-seth-smith/capture-paliament-to-renew-democracy-will-whittam-smith%E2%80%99s-strategy-work

www.voicesofthe7billion.co.uk/v111/2012/09/08/democracy-2015-a-campaign-that-feels-like-a-jigsaw-with-some-pieces-missing/

<http://unlockdemocracy.org.uk/blog/entry/democracy2015/can-it-make-a-difference>

www.james-gray.org/democracy-2015

<http://natogreendog.wordpress.com/2012/09/04/democracy-2015>