



Building a better democracy

Our Strategy 2013-15

- Electoral
- Reform
- Society



Our Vision
is a representative democracy
fit for the 21st Century

Our Ambition
is to pave the way for real
change to the way politics
works in Britain

A Digital Britain

Victorian Politics

It is a difficult time for all of us who believe in politics. The expenses scandal has come and gone. But the crisis of politics is still with us.

All the evidence shows British democracy is heading in the wrong direction. It isn't just that fewer of us are turning out on polling day - voters have changed, and our politics has failed to keep up. A system designed for the 19th century is under strain, and politicians are struggling to respond.

Reform has stalled. From the Alternative Vote referendum to the failed attempt at an elected Lords a piecemeal approach to fixing our democracy has failed.

So we have resolved to refocus our approach to the present crisis; both to reaffirm the values and vision that unite us, and to set out the role we can play to deliver real change.

We need to be at the heart of the democratic debate. Elections are the foundations of our democracy; and when they are flawed, so is everything that follows.

Britain needs a new reform agenda. The public keep coming second to vested interests and this frustrates the change our democracy so clearly needs. We will confront those vested interests head on, and show how a digital Britain is being held back by its Victorian politics.

We have to show why change is needed, and why now is the time to give more people, more chance to shape decisions that affect their lives.

We will put voters first. We will work to secure victories for voters today, as we build the credibility, connections and voice we will need to win in future. We will press hard for real change in local government in England and Wales. We will expose the reality of our broken politics under First-Past-the-Post. And with your support we will win the argument for a better democracy.

Our history, Our vision

“I trust that Great Britain, the mother of Parliaments, may once more take the lead among the great nations of the world by securing for herself a House of Commons which shall really represent the nation”

Our founder, Sir John Lubbock, 1884

When we were founded in 1884 it was already clear that our political system was failing to rise to the challenges presented by an emerging modern Britain.

Since then we have been at the forefront of political change, and remain the world's oldest organisation concerned with elections and political reform, recognised by the United Nations for over 30 years.

From securing fair votes in Scottish local government to exposing the accident waiting to happen that was the Police and Crime Commissioner Elections, we have put voters first, highlighted problems and offered common sense solutions.

We know that every year that passes with our steam age political system still in place is a missed opportunity for the people of Britain. **Our vision is a representative democracy fit for the 21st century.**

Our Mission

Campaigning for a better democracy

The Electoral Reform Society operates on a simple premise - that politics can be better than it is. We are campaigning for a better democracy.

We put voters first. **We believe:**

- Every vote and every voice has value and should be heard
- Everyone should be able to shape the decisions that affect their lives
- Our institutions should reflect the people they serve
- People should be able to hold those in power to account
- Politics should offer people real alternatives

That's the democracy we want to create. Everything we do is a step towards this vision.



Our goal

Our ambition for this strategy is to pave the way for real change in the way politics works in Britain.

In the run up to the 2015 General Election we will do this by:

1

Developing the credibility, relationships and voice to shape a new political reform agenda

2

Showing how First Past the Post is contributing to our broken politics

3

Winning the argument for fair votes in local government

1

Developing the credibility, connections and voice to shape a new political reform agenda

Politicians are still failing to come to terms with our broken politics. We will offer a powerful voice in that debate. We will change the way the world sees us and our issues, and cumulatively our achievements will show that we can set the agenda and deliver change.

- We recognise that the reform agenda in this parliament has stalled, requiring us to focus our efforts on influencing all the parties as they develop policy for the 2015 General Election.
- We will develop proposals for fair franchise laws that will give voters equal access to the democratic processes wherever they live and extend voting rights to 16 and 17 year olds.

- We will put pressure on the parties to tackle the lack of diversity in our politics: the underrepresentation of women and the dominance of a new 'Political Class'
- We will use our independence to best effect where politicians have proved incapable of making progress: on the power of big money in our politics and our unreformed House of Lords. We will also develop programmes of research and advocacy on the democratic deficit in the European Union.
- In Cardiff and Edinburgh constitutional reform is still topping the agenda. We will use the opportunities offered by devolution to make the case for further change in the nations and across the UK.

2

Showing how First Past the Post is part of our broken politics

We will work to expose the reality of politics under First Past the Post. We will ensure the case for change gains traction as part of the wider debate around our broken politics.

- We know that we can't sell a solution until we've demonstrated a problem first. We will seize every opportunity to show how voters are

- being short changed by our political system. We will hone in on the 'bread and butter' consequences the system has for political decision making.

- We will demonstrate the problems at all levels of government, and build a sustained, evidenced and compelling case for change.

3

Winning the argument for fair votes in local government

Following its successful introduction into Scottish local government, the Single Transferable Vote (STV) should now be adopted for all local elections in England and Wales. We will campaign tirelessly to achieve this.

- The localism agenda is running out of steam. We will be putting fair votes at the heart of the case for transforming local government across the UK.

- We will undertake a programme of research, campaigns and lobbying that sets out a compelling vision of a better local democracy where devolution of power and responsibility is accompanied by a step change in transparency and accountability. We will work to secure parties' commitments to reform in the run up to 2015.

How we will work

We are working to help Britain secure a democracy fit for the 21st century. Delivering this agenda requires a particular type of organisation: a catalyst that can create the space for change by painting a compelling picture of a democracy in crisis.

Put voters first

Politics is too important to be left to the politicians. We will offer an independent voice, and work across Britain to shape the democratic debate at all levels. We will put the interests of the citizens within our democracy first; communicating in ways that are relevant to them and the issues they care about.

Invest

We will develop the capacity to support increasingly ambitious campaigns - to be quick to identify opportunities and to act on them. We will go into the 2015 General Election with an engaged membership and the skills and experience to make a difference.

Explore

We will be a respected voice, engaging in living debates, keen to learn from others, impartially assessing issues to develop insightful solutions. We will be honest about what we know and believe, using first principles to develop new ideas and practical policies to strengthen our politics today.

Act

We will campaign collaboratively to create the democracy we deserve. We will draw the best from our staff in England, Wales and Scotland, our members and supporters and partners – to build the strongest possible network of advocates. And we will provide them with tools and ammunition to campaign for a better democracy.

