

# Government and Democracy

## Politics for people

**Our system of government is in crisis. It has lost the confidence of most people, many of whom no longer vote. Spin and sleaze dominate national politics.**

**Decisions are taken in secret and far away from the communities most affected. Archaic elements like the Monarchy and House of Lords remain.**

**We have an unfair electoral system and almost alone in the world we have no written constitution. Power and influence have been taken from cash-starved local councils. It is hardly surprising that this system cannot face up to the long term decisions needed to create a sustainable and just society.**

**The Green Party wants to fundamentally change the way this system works – to modernise and decentralise it, and make it fairer, more open and more accountable. Decisions must be taken at the most appropriate level to ensure proper accountability to those people affected by them. This means more local and regional decision-making and greater public participation at all levels.**

**All elections should be fair, and direct democracy should be enhanced through such means as holding referenda.**

### What needs to be done?

- A new written constitution should be devised, defining the rights and responsibilities of citizens.
- Elected Regional Assemblies should be introduced in England.
- New Parish and Community Councils should be set up.
- The House of Lords should be replaced by a wholly elected second chamber.
- Elections should be by a system of proportional representation.
- The constitutional functions of the monarchy should be abolished.
- The Church of England should be dis-established, placing all religions and denominations on the same footing.
- The voting age should be reduced to 16 years.
- A 'recall' system needs introducing – where politicians must step down to face re-election if petitioned to do so by a significant proportion of electors.

### Why destroy institutions that have operated in Britain for a thousand years?

Because they are not working. Almost a majority of people do not believe it is worth voting. Far-reaching change is needed if our institutions are to be relevant to people.

### Won't a written constitution simply enrich the lawyers?

Nearly every other country in the world has a written constitution – and they don't have protracted legal disputes; expensive legal wrangling is largely confined to the USA. Given the growth of judicial review in the UK, a clearer written system may actually reduce disputes.

### Won't all these levels of government mean more bureaucracy?

Different levels of government will not duplicate responsibilities - they will divide up the roles of government in a more appropriate way. Many regional agencies already exist – as unelected 'quangos' without democratic accountability. Elected regional assemblies would offer greater democracy and accountability – features absent from the current bureaucracies.

### Isn't this against the trend towards globalisation and the proposed centralisation of the European Community?

Yes. We recognise the importance of addressing issues of common concern at the European and international levels, but not through a European super-state or inappropriate global bodies like the World Trade Organisation (WTO) which undermine local democracy and global justice.

### Don't we need a strong nation state to secure defence against foreign aggressors?

Each function of government has an appropriate level, and defence would remain a national responsibility for the foreseeable future. But real security depends upon a much stronger commitment to international cooperation and genuine efforts for greater international justice and peace.

### Will these changes make politicians more responsible for their actions?

For democracy to work properly people must be able to play an active part and hold their elected representatives to account. But as well as real democracy we need policies for social/economic justice and protection of the planet. Ultimately people must be able to take responsibility for the policies of the politicians they elect.

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