

Pwyllgor Rhanbarthol y De Orllewin

Cofnodion (SWaWR(2)-02-05)

Dyddiad y cyfarfod: Dydd Gwener 14 Hydref 2005

Amser y cyfarfod: 9.30 am – 12.15 pm

Lleoliad y cyfarfod: Y Ganolfan Ddinesig, Castell-nedd

Aelodau'r Cynulliad a oedd yn bresennol

Aelod Cynulliad	Etholaeth
Peter Black	Gorllewin De Cymru
Janet Davies (Cadeirydd)	Gorllewin De Cymru
Brian Gibbons	Aberafan
Edwina Hart	Gwyr
Dai Lloyd	Gorllewin De Cymru
Val Lloyd	Dwyrain Abertawe
Gwenda Thomas	Castell-nedd

Yn bresennol

Enw	Yn cynrychioli (os ydyw'n berthnasol)
Cliff Croft	Grwp Mynediad Castell-nedd a Phort Talbot
Yvonne Hurcombe	Pensiynwyr Cymru
Margaret Minhinnick	Cymru Gynaliadwy

Gwasanaeth y Pwyllgor a oedd yn bresennol

Enw	Teitl swydd
Jane Westlake	Clerc y Pwyllgor

Claire Morris

Dirprwy Glerc y Pwyllgor

Derbyniwyd ymddiheuriadau gan:

Aelod Cynulliad	Etholaeth
Alun Cairns	Gorllewin De Cymru
Andrew Davies	Gorllewin Abertawe
Janice Gregory	Ogwr
Carwyn Jones	Pen-y-bont ar Ogwr

Eitem 1: Croeso, Cyflwyniad ac Ethol Cadeirydd

1.1 Croesawodd y Cadeirydd Aelodau'r Pwyllgor ac aelodau o'r cyhoedd.

1.2 Nid oedd unrhyw fuddiannau i'w datgan.

Eitem 2: Craffu ar Drefniadau Etholiadol yng Nghymru

2.1 Dywedodd y Cadeirydd y byddai'r farn a dderbyniwyd yn cael ei adrodd yn ôl i Ann Jones, Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor Llywodraeth Leol a Gwasanaethau Cyhoeddus.

2.2 Rhoddodd Yvonne Hurcombe gyflwyniad ar ran Pensiynwyr Cymru. Mae copi o'i chyflwyniad yn Atodiad 1.

2.3 Gwnaeth Yvonne Hurbcombe y sylwadau canlynol mewn ymateb i gwestiynau gan Aelodau:

- Dylai Swyddogion Canlyniadau fod â mwy o bwer i ymchwilio i dwyll etholiadol
- Gellid lleihau twyll pe bai gofyn i bobl ddarparu tystiolaeth adnabyddiaeth a'u dyddiad geni wrth bleidleisio.
- Dylid ehangu rôl yr heddlu o ran monitro etholiadau.
- Mae'r ffaith bod polis?au'r pleidiau gwleidyddol nawr yn fwy tebyg i'w gilydd yn ei gwneud yn anoddach i bobl benderfynu i bwy i bleidleisio.
- Dylid dysgu dinasyddiaeth weithredol a gwleidyddiaeth mewn ysgolion fel bod pobl ifanc yn deall pam y dylent bleidleisio.

2.4 Dywedodd Yr Uwch Arolygydd Cliff Filer o Uned Castell-nedd a Phort Talbot, Heddlu De Cymru bod gan yr heddlu rôl o ran monitro etholiadau ac roedd yn ddyletswydd y cymerai ef a'i swyddogion yn

ddifrifol iawn.

2.5 Dywedodd Frank Little, Cadeirydd y Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol lleol mai un rheswm pam nad oedd pobl yn cofrestru i bleidleisio oedd oherwydd y defnydd cynyddol a wneir o'r gofrestr etholiadol ar gyfer dibenion masnachol. Teimlai hefyd bod twyll pleidleisio drwy'r post yn gyffredin: dim ond megis dechrau yw achos Birmingham. Credai hefyd y byddai defnyddio Technoleg Gwybodaeth a phleidleisio ar lein yn rhoi mwy o gyfleon i ddifetha'r bleidlais.

2.6 Dywedodd Dennis Little, Cyngor Tref Ystradgynlais y bu bob amser yn broblem cael pobl i bleidleisio a nid oedd gwleidyddion yn helpu eu hunain trwy ddenu cymaint o gyhoeddusrwydd gwael.

2.7 Dywedodd Roger Knight, Prifysgol y Drydedd Oes bod gan Gymru fesur o gynrychiolaeth gyfrannol yn etholiadau'r Cynulliad ond achosodd hyn i Lywodraeth y Cynulliad beidio a chael mwyafrif clir.

2.8 Dywedodd Tim Palmer, Undeb Cenedlaethol Myfyrwyr Cymru, gan y canfuwyd mai pobl ifanc oedd y grwp lleiaf tebygol o bleidleisio, gallai gostwng yr oed pleidleisio i 16 a gwneud dinasyddiaeth yn rhan o'r cwricwlwm cenedlaeth (fel y mae yn Lloegr) annog mwy o bobl ifanc i droi allan.

2.9 Rhoddodd Cliff Croft gyflwyniad ar ran Grwp Mynediad Castell-nedd a Phort Talbot. Mae copi o'i gyflwyniad yn Atodiad 2.

2.10 Dywedodd Edwina Hart, y Gweinidog dros Gyfiawnder Cymdeithasol ac Adfywio bod adroddiad wedi ei baratoi ar gyfer y Cynulliad ar brinder dehonglwyr Iaith Arwyddion Prydain (BSL) a gobeithid y byddai arian yn dod ar gael i hyfforddi mwy.

2.11 Rhoddodd Margaret Minhinnick, o Cymru Gynaliadwy gyflwyniad. Mae copi yn Atodiad 3.

2.12 Dywedodd Dawn Gullis, Mencap Cymru, iddi dderbyn tystiolaeth gan bobl ag anableddau dysgu na wnâi eu gweithwyr cymorth fynd â hwy i'r orsaf bleidleisio er bod arnynt eisiau pleidleisio.

2.13 Dywedodd Edwina Hart, y Gweinidog Dros Gyfiawnder Cymdeithasol ac Adfywio y byddai'n gofyn i'w swyddogion ymchwilio i hyn.

2.14 Gofynnodd Janice Dudley, Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Castell-nedd a Phort Talbot am farn yr Aelodau ynghylch cynigion y Papur Gwyn i rwystro Aelodau'r Cynulliad rhag sefyll ar gyfer etholaethau a rhanbarthau.

2.15 Dywedodd y Cyng John Warman, Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Castell-nedd a Phort Talbot bod angen eglurhad o'r gwahaniaeth rhwng etholiadau lleol, cenedlaethol, y Cynulliad ac Ewrop. Câi pobl eu cymell yn wahanol ar gyfer gwahanol lefelau o lywodraeth. Ni chaniateir i blant dan 16 oed gael mynediad i orsafoedd pleidleisio, felly ni fyddai pobl ifanc 16 oed yn barod ar gyfer y broses o bleidleisio. Teimlai hefyd na fyddai pleidleisio electronig yn cymryd lle mynd allan i bleidleisio.

2.16 Dywedodd yr Henadur Morlais Thomas, Cyngor Tref Gorseinon bod mynediad i'r anabl wedi gwella ond ei bod yn cymryd amser, gan nad oedd gan gyrff cyhoeddus bob amser ddigon o arian i wneud gwelliannau'n ddigon cyflym.

2.17 Dywedodd Ivor Rees, Prifysgol y Drydedd Oes y byddai cynrychiolaeth gyfrannol yn fwy priodol gan bod mwy o ymgeiswyr nawr yn sefyll am etholiad. Dylai bod gan y Cynulliad nawr wyth deg o aelodau wedi eu hethol drwy'r bleidlais sengl drosglwyddadwy.

2.18 Dywedodd Pat Dunmore, Cymunedau sy'n Gofalu, i arolwg a wnaeth ei sefydliad hi ganfod y teimlai cyfran fawr o bobl ifanc nad oeddent yn cael y cyfle i ymwneud â phenderfyniadau a oedd yn effeithio arnynt hwy. Roedd Cynghorau Ysgolion yn gam ymlaen ond y duedd oedd iddynt gynnwys y bobl ifanc hynny a oedd eisoes ynghlwm â'r maes. Dylid gostwng yr oed pleidleisio i 16.

2.19 Amlygodd Ray Thomas, Mudiad Gweithredu Gofalwyr yr anawsterau a wynebai llawer o ofalwyr wrth geisio pleidleisio.

2.20 Gofynnodd Yvonne Hurcombe, Cadeirydd Gofal am y Difrifol Wael am ofal lliniarol ar gyfer cleifion a oedd heb fod yn dioddef o ganser ond a oedd yn dioddef o salwch cynyddol a fyddai'n cyfyngu ar eu hoes.

2.21 Dywedodd Brian Gibbons, y Gweinidog dros Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol i gronfa arbenigol gael ei sefydlu ar gyfer gofal lliniarol a chydabu y dylai hyn fod wedi ei gysylltu â'r broses gomisiynu. Credai y byddai'n angenrheidiol i ddatblygu gwasanaethau ar gyfer diwedd oes ond byddai hyn ymhen rhai blynyddoedd.

Gweithredu

Byddai'r Cadeirydd yn anfon copi o'r cofnodion at Gadeirydd y Pwyllgor Llywodraeth Leol a Gwasanaethau Cyhoeddus.

Eitem 3: Cofnodion

3.1 Derbyniwyd cofnodion y cyfarfod a gynhaliwyd ar 20 Mai.

Dyddiad y Cyfarfod Nesaf

Y dyddiad dros-dro ar gyfer y cyfarfod hwn oedd 17 Mawrth ond roedd hyn i'w gadarnhau.

Gwasanaeth y Pwyllgor

Good morning ladies and gentleman. My name is Yvonne Hurcombe and I am here today in my capacity as Chairperson of Wales Pensioners. I would like to start by telling you a little bit about the organisation I represent.

The idea of providing support for older people was brought about more than 30 years ago. At that time the organisation was known as The Retired Members Association. The title changed 10 years ago to the Wales Pensioners. The objective was to campaign and lobby for the rights of the older person and we have been active in establishing forums in each of the counties in Wales and are presently based at Topic House in Townhill, Swansea. Mr Gordon Carruthers who was founder member and chairman has recently retired at the age of 87 years. Wales Pensioners is supported by the City and County of Swansea.

Issue 1 - Voter Registration

I believe that the main reason for not registering is Apathy. For various reasons people simply do not want to vote.

Other reasons could be a lack of understanding of the system and the politicians or not feeling valued.

In response to the question "Did you know it is compulsory to register to vote in the UK?" I believe it is compulsory to register and not registering could result in a fine of up to £1000, but voting is solely a matter of choice. It is not compulsory to vote only to register.

Issue 2 - Low Turnout

Reasons for low turnout could include

- Apathy - where they feel that their vote is not going to change anything.
- Transport - when there is no available transport to and from the polling station it becomes more difficult for the older voter. Many pensioners do not have their own vehicle and rely on others for transport.
- Some people rely on others for moral support and do not feel able to attend the polling station alone.
- Street cred - not being fashionable and peer pressure could be reasons for younger people not voting.

Ways of addressing these problems could include

- If transport were supplied by the local political party members then both the transport and moral

support issues may be addressed.

- Non political marketing aimed at promoting the importance of voting. Perhaps aimed at the younger element of the population to overcome the effects of street cred, fashionable and adverse peer pressure.
- It may be beneficial to educate people to understand the reasoning behind voting not just as a duty but as a way of providing change.

Issue 3 - Ways of Voting

Older people are wary of technology and also most people do not accept change very easily and feel safer and more comfortable with the system they are already familiar with.

Polling cards are generally easy to understand and do not appear to create too much of a problem. Large print may be an option to help partially sighted people.

People appear to be distrustful of the postal voting system. Many feel that there might be unscrupulous people who would sabotage the voting which I believe has occurred in the past.

Some people are unable to post the form and others are not confident that their votes will be safely delivered.

Also if the form has not been filled in properly the vote will be deemed invalid.

Issue 4 - Access

Generally the issue of access to the polling stations was not a problem. However with some of the smaller venues use of a wheelchair was difficult.

As previously mentioned in Issue 2, transport to and from the venue can be a problem for some older or disabled people.

Issue 5 - Language

In general it would appear that most people are able to understand the forms and the forms are available in languages required by most people.

I would also like to mention the following information which was obtained from the training officer at the Minority Ethnic Women's Network based in Swansea who mentioned:

- Cultural Issues

In some cultures women are excluded from decision making and therefore are not accustomed to voting and other forms of decision making.

- Education

It may be beneficial to understand the reasoning behind voting not just as a duty but as a way of providing change.

- Translation

A lot of meaning can be lost in translation. This should be taken into consideration when translation is used.

- Heritage and Culture

Should be a factor when forms are being prepared.

I would like to close by thanking you for inviting me here to speak on behalf of the Wales Pensioners.

Atodiad 2

Neath Port Talbot Access Group

Local Government Elections

There are several reasons why disabled people are discouraged from taking part in Local elections

- Lack of confidence in the ability of politicians and Councils to make a difference to our lives
- Disabled people know little or nothing about candidate and party policies.
- Information is not provided in a suitable manner.
- Some disabled people have problems travelling to and from the Polling station.
- There are problems accessing the Polling station and its facilities.

What can be done to change minds?

- The Local Councils should provide information about how it operates, what it has done and is planning to do, using a suitable media.

e.g. I often receive complaints and comments from disabled people about service provision, but when it is explained that a budget has been allocated and certain things have been done on their behalf over the past five years; when budgets and the need for forward planning are explained,

most people accept this and are more prepared to wait for their problems to be corrected, but not too long.

- Information must be provided in accessible media or it is wasted time and effort.
- Providing information includes making available printed material in a font size to suit individuals; Braille or in audio for people with visual impairments. Suitable font and background colour for people have certain forms of dyslexia.
- It must be remembered that people who are deaf like those with Learning disabilities, sometimes need simplified Grammar or BSL on Video or DVD. A deaf interpreter can make a DVD as easily as an audio tape is made.

One format does not meet all requirements.

Having been prepared to supply information in requested alternative formats, Councils` should ascertain if the disabled person requires all future information in that format and send all future publications in the requested format. Records should be kept of the communication requirements, within Data Protection Act guidelines.

It is important that information is supplied for hard to reach people, such as housebound people and people without access to public transport.

Many think that Councils are directly responsible for many Health issues, the Police, and Transport, so an explanation of areas of responsibility is needed.

Councillors and officers should listen to comments about what has been done that satisfied disabled people and build on them.

Listen to their problems; if questions are asked and cannot be answered immediately tell them honestly when to expect a reply. The reply should tell them how, if and when their problems will be attended to, or there should be an acceptable reason why their needs cannot be met.

Again, People may fail to register because Electoral Registration forms are not understood as they are not provided or offered in alternative formats or help may be required to fill in the form.

This also may lead to failure to understand that it is compulsory to register.

There is need of a follow up visit when forms are not returned on time. Issuing authorities should be aware if alternative formats or help with form filling are required. Help is likely to be required by People who have visual impairments, learning disabilities or are deaf. Deaf people may need the help of a BSL interpreter.

Means of asking for help should be in large print in a prominent position on the forms.

There has never been contact information on registration forms for deaf people who need help understanding or form filling.

Deaf people use several forms of communication, Mini com phones, Video Phones, Text messaging, E Mail. Please try to accommodate them and ensure that Phone numbers are published. People with Speech impairments may also need to use these forms of communication.

I do not know anyone that has yet received or been offered Campaign literature in an alternative format.

Information on the literature never informs how a deaf person may make contact with the candidate or electoral officer.

Almost 20% of the population are unable to read newsprint, but candidates' election literature is frequently printed in small fonts with bad colour contrasts, indicating that Candidates have not considered the needs of 20% of their potential voters.

Members attending events for ten years or more say that politicians have not been accompanied by BSL interpreters often there is no loop system, thus excluding Deaf people and people using hearing aids from the proceedings.

Deaf persons representatives point out that normally alternative formats are available such as Large print, Braille and audio, plus Welsh and may be Punjabi, but never BSL on video or DVD.

As said earlier, one format does not meet everyone's needs.

Disabled people's personal needs must be catered for if they are expected to vote; politicians must make an effort to consider their needs when trying to woo voters.

Candidates or their representatives should make a greater effort to meet the people whom they are wooing.

Having found out about the Council and the Candidates the disabled person has decided to vote. The decision now is does he or she use a Postal vote, or attend the Polling Station.

If using a Postal vote, who will help to fill it in?

Some may use a Website to cast a vote if this option were available.

As many are independent and would preferably attend the polling station; it is necessary to ascertain if the Polling station is Accessible for all.

This information should be available for disabled people on request in appropriate format via the registration form.

Information provided should state details of physical access; e.g. level or ramped entrance; availability of a loop system for Hearing Aid users; Help for Deaf people; Large print voting papers or magnifiers or other assistive facilities for people with visual impairments; suitable height and width polling booths for wheelchair users, the polling booths should be well light, and very important for disabled people; understanding and helpful polling clerks.

Consider allowing people to have a choice of Polling stations if the local one is unsuitable.

A Survey carried out by Scope at the time of the Assembly elections, having received reports on a tenth of them revealed that over 75% of polling stations in Wales failed to meet the needs disabled people in one or more ways.

In Neath Port Talbot the percentage is far better because Council has discussed arrangements following previous Elections and worked to make improvements.

If happy with the proposed access and facilities at the Polling station, means of transport have to be considered. All is O K if you have your own or access to a friend's vehicle. The candidates literature or personal contact should have told the elector if in need of transport, how to contact a transport provider. Hopefully with transport free of charge.

Atodiad 3

Margaret Minninnick Comments on the Issue of Low Electoral Voting

Introduction

I am pleased to be involved today and am speaking from my experience establishing Friends of the Earth Cymru and after 10 years leaving to set up Sustainable Wales (SW). Our future is dependent upon action to protect the environment and the involvement of informed citizens who contribute to the decision-making process. This I believe will re-engage citizens in local politics and create a stronger foundation for sustainable communities. This is fundamental to the debate today.

Indeed 2 major all Wales events were organised by SW before the first Assembly elections and after the first year of operation called 'Finding Our Voices'. Over 400 people attended from all walks of life – their intention was to explore and challenge for more interesting, meaningful and fruitful ways of involving the community in local decision-making. (Reports available on www.sustainablewales.org.uk)

The creation of the National Assembly was a significant event – part of the process of bringing government closer to the people, but is it? Are our voices really heard any more than they ever were? Do

our contributions change anything? Power is too centralised in Westminster and people have no control over their local affairs. Many politicians in Wales, I think, believe they are involving people in the democratic process - but it's a too shallow involvement. It softens up and appeases - but it's not effective in most cases. It tends to involve the usual suspects, like myself - but what about all the others who are disengaged, disillusioned, or disadvantaged? A wider social grouping is necessary.

Why should we complain that people don't vote for political parties when those parties do not represent their interests and are not interested in them? For too many politicians, politics is the great incestuous game of power. People sense - often correctly - that what politicians are interested in, is politics. (only 2% of population belong to a political party and few are active)

We should also ask what are people voting for when they vote? Too often it seems to be the maintenance of a self-perpetuating establishment, whether Labour or Conservative. For example - the Labour Party in 1997 maintained the previous government's spending programme.

Voting is the pinnacle of citizenship, it might be said. But we are citizens of what? A consumer state? Tescoland? A country that invaded Iraq against the wishes of the majority?

Consider the Iraq invasion. The official UK opposition - the Conservatives - were even more eager for it than the Labour government.. No major party spoke for the majority - an astonishing state of affairs. Many young people were against the invasion. Have they already been alienated from the voting process?

There is a disconnect between the Westminster village and locally.

Politician's ways of 'doing politics' is not interesting, it is not exciting, there is no vision, or passion - they have a low regard and have lost our trust.

No - we should not berate people for not voting. We should blame instead the political parties for disenchanting so many of the population. Blame politics, not the people.

People vote if they sense they have a stake in things. But with power so firmly exercised by big business and bewildering bureaucracies, people increasingly feel ignored. Therefore, they ignore politics - and that's to the detriment of our society.

To comment on some of the questions posed:-

1. Registration

* I can't say that I was really aware that voting was compulsory, registering to vote can seem bureaucratic to certain people - those with learning difficulties; those who find the forms difficult.

Conversely, registration by household can invite problems – why should a wife be registered by her husband (or vice versa?)

* Maybe people should be encouraged to register to vote just as now they register with doctor or dentist – especially if they move away.

2. Low Turn out? Fewer People Voting

- Greater mobility – more people move away from their communities, maybe moving frequently. Is it difficult to keep up with them?

* People will vote in Welsh Assembly elections when they feel that Welsh Assembly members have real power and can make important decisions. Until then, turn out will be very low. They sense power is far too centralised and controlled by successive elites.

- As with Iraq, people might find little to choose between the parties. Maybe people want to vote but for "none of the above". Again, maybe we should not be asking why people don't vote. What we should be asking instead is why the political parties cannot attract voters or enthuse them. Is our party system outmoded? Is it behind the times for contemporary society?
- But consider this - Even when 70 – 80 percent of people voted – was that such a good thing? It created a political monoculture in various parts of the UK – such as the south Wales valleys. With hindsight, maybe this was not healthy for the area. There are many county boroughs in Wales today where one party has a stranglehold – even with only 30 percent voter turnout. Maybe people fail to vote because of this "iron grip" certain parties have in certain areas.
- Lowering the voting age to 16 could attract young people before they are preoccupied with other priorities and this could get them started.

3. Ways of Voting

Provision of more convenience and choice when voting is no bad thing -as long as there is no potential for coercion and it is still secret.

- Text or Internet voting would be attractive to the young – who are now poor voters. But text etc would not attract older voters – though the majority of these already vote.
- Might text / internet etc voting be subject to fraud – as we have seen with postal voting?
- There would be a need to be mindful of sectors of young people who could not afford or unable to implement the technology.- a digital deficit.

- Could there be an expansion of places to vote. At work? Via computer in the supermarket? But are we saying our lives are now so busy we cannot spare the time for the ritual of a visit to the polling station. This would seem very depressing.
- What about travelling polling stations? (Like travelling libraries and supermarket deliveries to homes?)
- Attracting young people might be done via new technology. But we should ask whether young people find anything relevant in any of the parties pronouncements. Youth are not prominent within the political parties where is Young Labour or the Young Conservatives, etc. ? Do we need A NEW PARTY for young people?

Or, for instance, should it be mandatory that a certain proportion of any local authority councillors should be aged under 50; under 40; under 30. And that 50% are female?

4.Voting stations

- Maybe the booths could be made more welcome. They are austere places. What about music? Refreshments? A chance of political debate after voting has taken place in 'discussion lounges' in schools, church halls, etc where you could exchange views. Indeed, is voting a severe anti-climax? Could we do other things at the polling stations?

* As to voting places - why not voting in Libraries? Then, we have attracted people who might stay and browse.

5.Language

- The forms might be re-designed and made instantly understandable. They should look important , modern and fresh. The words, "VOTING CARD" in big letters, with your name & address, etc.
- HOWEVER, IT IS NOT JUST ABOUT MAKING IT EASY BUT ABOUT MAKING IT IMPORTANT.
- VOTING IS NOT THE ONLY WAY TO GAIN DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION.

Voting could be augmented by other procedures. It is not the only way to engage with the citizen. Isn't society telling us that it wants to move from a representative style of democracy to a more participatory style of democracy one where there is more sharing of power or ownership of decision-making?.

Locally people need to be seen to be involved in agenda setting and the final decision. Citizens need to influence both these stages.

Often the decision has already been taken by the political authority about how much scope there will be for public involvement - there is no sharing of power. A deepening of citizen participation is required.

For instance:

Community Consultation techniques are used to elicit opinion, build capacity and extract new ideas throughout the year - but care needs to be taken not to overload.

e.g. Roundtable debates, planning for real, citizen's juries/panels, community visioning, participatory theatre, referenda, etc, etc.

- Candidates could be interviewed by Citizens' Juries in full view of a local audience.
- A written and oral exam would be set for candidates every 5 years to check knowledge and passion!
- Training would be provided for local councillors on urgent issues. - or for particular entire community/county borough councils, to get members up to scratch on issues such as Climate Change, Sustainable Development, Welfare Rights. Then voters would be more confident in their councillors.
- Facilitation to be done by independent experts to ensure fairness
- Resources and time are given to these type of processes.

Suggested reading:

'Beyond the Ballot - 57 Democratic Innovations From Around The World' was generated as evidence to, and published by, the POWER Inquiry – an independent inquiry into the state of Britain's democracy, chaired by Helena Kennedy QC.

The POWER Inquiry was established in 2004 to explore how political participation and involvement might be increased and deepened in Britain. Its investigation into Britain's political processes is based on the belief that a healthy democratic system requires the active participation of its citizens and that without this the vitality and legitimacy of its democracy is undermined.

See www.powerinquiry.org