



Make Votes Matter Update - October 2019

Summary

September was an interesting month for British politics, to say the least! Parliament was prorogued, then MPs returned to the Commons after the Supreme Court ruled prorogation was unlawful.

As a result, the Labour Party Conference wound down slightly earlier than planned, and the Conservative Party Conference was scaled back after politicians [rejected a request](#) for a three-day recess for conference to go ahead. MVM's Co-Chief Executive Klina Jordan had been due to go to Manchester for the Conservative Party Conference, but she was refused a ticket, along with various other charities, not-for-profits and journalists. This was disappointing, especially given recent progress in converting Conservative MPs to Proportional Representation (PR). More on conference season below, along with everything else you need to know about the movement for PR!

Organisation

- The move to a new and more sophisticated email and activist support system is just about complete. We will be bringing you new-style newsletters and more interactive functionality on our website very soon.
 - We're about to launch our 2019 Crowdfunder. Raising our initial target of £50,000 will secure the sustainability of the campaign well into 2020. Any assistance activists and local groups can provide by inviting friends, family and the public to donate will be very welcome - and of course any contribution you can make will be greatly appreciated.
 - We continue the process of recruiting a full-time fundraiser.
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Grassroots movement

Contact: local@makevotesmatter.org.uk

Objective: to raise the profile of PR in the public, political and media agenda

Planning

- As mentioned in last month's update, we postponed plans for a mass lobby of Parliament this autumn due to the likelihood of a general election in the near future (the non-reimbursable costs of a lobby of this size are too significant given the uncertainty).
- Instead, we're finalising our plans in the event of a general election - we have an exciting creative action planned for results day!
- Further ahead, we're planning a series of events in early 2020 aimed at building the movement, training up activists, and launching our all-events speaker programme. Watch this space.

Local groups

- [National Democracy Week](#) runs from October 14th to 20th, and we're encouraging local groups and campaigners to run a 'writeathon' as part of a pop-up campaign street stall. For more details on what's involved, read our ['how to' guide](#) and our [press release template](#) with ideas on how to create headlines in your local press. You can run a 'writeathon' at any time of year. Well done MVM North London who recently piloted the idea, notching up 7 letters and 40 postcards to MPs including Theresa Villiers, Mike Freer, Jeremy Corbyn and Bambous Charalambous, with the bulk for the local MP Catherine West.
- Thank you to Keira for all her work to get the Stroud group up and running. Due to family commitments, however, we need to find a new volunteer to take the group forward and we are now in discussion with one of our supporters to lead on coordinating this group. Watch this space for more news on MVM Stroud!
- We have new groups in the pipeline in the Barnsley and Wakefield area, in Thanet covering Margate and Ramsgate, and in Southport and Tynemouth.
- We are developing a Diversity Plan and as part of this we have developed a [new leaflet](#) for a Black and Minority Ethnic audience.

Next actions

- **Universities toolkit!** We've put together a [toolkit for university students](#) who are interested in setting up a Make Votes Matter group on campus. It includes a number of resources, background reading and case studies to encourage debate. Massive thanks to Yasmin, Jake, Daniel and Barth for all their work on this!
- **Welfare call:** Engagement Leader Surrinder has started his welfare calls to activists to help explore any personal impact of MVM related campaigning. Calls will also be an opportunity to discuss various aspects of local action networks/groups.

[The Make Votes Matter Alliance](#)

Contact: team@makevotesmatter.org.uk

Objective: coordinating all the parties, organisations and public figures who support PR to win real democracy together

Alliance meetings: the next meeting is on Thursday 24th October.

Alliance building

- We met with Wanda Wyporska, Director of the Equalities Trust, who was a panelist at our recent Black Votes Matter event, and hope to confirm official collaborations soon
- We held a very successful fringe event at Liberal Democrat conference including powerful speeches from Angela Smith MP, Baroness Sal Brinton, Wera Hobhouse MP and Lord Paul Tyler.
- We met with many key Liberal Democrats at their national conference including Jane Dodds MP, Jane Brophy MEP and Caroline Voaden MEP.
- We had a very successful Labour Conference with many important discussions with MPs and public figures.

- We also attended the TUC Congress, two regional Brexit Party conferences, the Green Party conference and the Plaid Cymru conference, and were delighted to have some excellent networking and campaigning opportunities.
- Many conversations are underway with potential new Alliance members. In particular we're developing relationships with various peers.

Labour and affiliates

Contact: labour4pr@makevotesmatter.org.uk

Objective: to mobilise support within the Labour Party and affiliated trade unions, leading to Labour changing its policy to support PR for general elections.

Labour Party Conference

- This was a great year for us at the Labour Party conference, organising a delegates' briefing, running an exhibition stand and a well attended fringe event - all with the [Labour Campaign for Electoral Reform](#).
- The fringe was busy with around 150 people in attendance. Speakers at the fringe included Stephen Kinnock MP, Emma Dent Coad MP, Faiza Shaheen (CLASS), Laura Parker (Momentum), Mark Serwotka (PCS) and Eddie Izzard. John McDonnell, who planned to drop in, was unable to make it on the day - but being able to advertise his presence probably helped get people through the door! Joe Sousek gave an overview of the Peterloo report, followed by speeches, Q&A and a drinks reception. We were really pleased to see other speakers on the panel volunteering the arguments arising from the Peterloo report and our earlier research - a sign that our narrative of the Labour case for PR is really embedding itself.
- Our reception at the stall was overwhelmingly positive. We signed up hundreds of new contacts - all active Labour Party and/or union members - and met dozens of Labour MPs. Now we're following up to encourage them to take appropriate action.
- This was not going to be the year that Labour backs PR; we have further groundwork to lay before that becomes possible. Nonetheless, three CLPs sent motions on PR to Labour conference (as opposed to sending them to the National Policy Forum). We organised a delegates briefing - in part to practice it and learn from the experience for future years (hopefully next year!) when the stakes are higher. PR wasn't one of the subjects chosen in the "priorities" ballot, but it received a respectable level of support from delegates.
- We will shortly publish a blog providing a detailed account of Labour conference.

Labour speaker programme

- In September, the number of CLPs to have passed motions in favour of PR rose to 77, including several we learned about at conference.
- Make Votes Matter and the Labour Campaign for Electoral Reform are able to send out engaging speakers to CLPs and branches so if you haven't hosted one of our speakers yet please do [get in touch](#).

- We are rolling out our speaker programme to Co-operative branches and have several speakers booked in, if you are a Co-operative party member and would like a speaker to your branch please do get in touch.

Trade Unions for PR

- We are encouraging members of all trade unions to put [our model motion](#) to their 2020 annual conferences calling for the union to move on PR - and can provide ongoing support to you with this process. If you are a trade union member - or a Labour member who is considering joining a trade union - sign up [here](#) and we'll be in touch.
- Of the Labour-affiliated trade unions, two support PR (BFAWU and TSSA), two oppose PR (GMB and Usdaw), and the rest have no policy (including Unite and Unison). We are continuing to engage with the membership by attending events such as the recent Peterloo rally (18th August), the Burston Strike School (1st September) and Trade Union Congress (mid September). We continue to send speakers to branches and trades councils.

Parliamentary Labour Party

- We have sent out invitations to a private event in Parliament this month aimed at increasing support for PR among MPs, and progressing an open letter from Labour MPs to the party Leadership, calling on Labour to have a consultation on electoral reform.
- We met numerous Labour MPs, senior staff and trade union leaders at Labour conference, with many useful discussions about the case for PR and future plans.
- One third of current Labour MPs are known to have said they are in favour of PR for general elections. A much smaller number have publicly supported First Past the Post.

Media highlights

A couple of highlights include [The Real Agenda podcast](#) with Tom Burgess, featuring Make Votes Matter's Co-CEO Klina Jordan talking about changing the voting system.

One of our tweets made headlines in [the Canary](#), and we were quick to set the record straight that we don't want to "take down" any party, as reported; we just want the Conservatives and all parties to have a share of the seats that matches their share of the vote.

And to help launch our latest report *Peterloo: the path to Proportional Representation*, our thanks go to videographer Greg Needham who made this [powerful short film](#) in and around Manchester, the site of the massacre, 200 years later.