

Assemblies for Democracy (London):

Planning Group meeting

Decisions from 11 September 12-5pm

Present: Julie Timbrell, Andy Paice (facilitated second half of meeting), Corinna Lotz (facilitated first half of meeting), Paul Feldman, Steve Freeman, Isky Gordon, Mary Fee, Robbie Griffiths, Phil England. **Apologies:** James, Peter Arkell. Martha Baker.

1 Minutes of last meeting

These were agreed as a correct record.

Matters arising:

- Paul had written to Jeremy Corby and Owen Smith on behalf of A4D asking if they would support a citizen-led constitutional convention. Jeremy Corbyn made a press announcement two days about his commitments to democracy including “a radical overhaul of the British constitution” and “creating a new role for citizens’ assemblies in shaping political accountability for the future.”
- **Corinna** would circulate Corbyn’s full press statement again.
- **Paul** would write to the Green Party, SNP, Plaid Cymru and Mebyon Kermor (Cornish nationalist party).

2 Report backs from working groups

i) Link with Trickett and KCH process

Phil and Paul presented the groups outline strategy for the next six months:

Now:

- Monitor progress of Trickett/King's initiative - follow up letter to Professor Blackburn. Ask Lawson if he's found anything out (again)
- Monitor progress of other initiatives (e.g. Electoral Reform Society, More United, Progressive Alliance, Unlock Democracy)
- How to capitalise on Labour leadership election? Green Party leadership election? Seek meeting with C Lucas and whoever is Labour's minister after election, citing Corbyn statement on democracy and the constitution.
- Tie in with Brexit and changes to the constitution to justify a convention – including upcoming court case on who has the power to invoke Article 50 (article, comment piece or letter)

Ongoing/next six months:

- Campaign for best possible outcome of Trickett/King's initiative
- Work with others campaigning on this issue and who support our principle (Compass, Unlock Democracy, etc)
- Use the media (eg letters to the press)
- Put pressure on [MPs and] political parties
- NVDA training? -> Direct actions/publicity stunts?
- Publish analysis of present UK constitution
- [With others prepare trial independent citizens' convention in 2017]

ii) Description and critical analysis of our present constitution

Paul had assembled a list of relevant documents to draw on here <https://docs.google.com/document/d/16rzzAntnPmtiCrqjsHMF1qIPDEuFQbxDR7ojxyXh7aQ/edit?ts=57a874ac>

In particular he recommended that **everyone** reads:

- The [Cabinet Manual](#). A guide to laws, conventions and rules on the operation of government (The Cabinet Office) and
- [The UK Constitution - A summary, with options for reform](#). (House of Commons Political and Constitutional Reform Committee).

Paul and **Steve** would make a presentation on the current constitution at the next planning group meeting.

iii) Roadmap to a constitutional convention

Ideas included:

- Working with others to decide a name for the campaign and agree on any branding elements
- A dedicated website, twitter feed and facebook account.

Julie and **Paul & Steve** would write proposal for the next meeting to consider about how to conduct a convention. These could be put on Loomio in advance of the meeting so that their merits could start to be considered and debated. They could also be discussed further in the roadmap group.

iv) Events and face-to-face meetings

Andy was pursuing the possibility of holding a participatory session on the constitution at the Momentum conference in Liverpool later this month.

The group also discussed:

- An event at the Hive that would be aimed at drawing in activist groups and campaigns
- A peoples conference to be held during the political party conference season

v) Providing a platform for online content

Naadir set up a googledoc where people had assembled a) a list of requirements that were needed from a web platform and b) a list of platforms to evaluate: Appgree, Vocaleyes, Your Priorities, Loomio and DemocracyOS. This work was ongoing and **everyone** was invited to take part in this work as the group capacity was currently low. Drop Phil a line and he'll send you the link to the googledoc. **Chris Forman** had a proposal about using block chains (the software used for bitcoin) that he said he would write up.

The meeting agreed to the formation of a new working group aimed at maximising the effective use of the existing Assemblies for Democracy website. Initial membership: **Robbie**, **Paul** and **Mary**.

3 Working session to review Loomio

Most people felt the Loomio discussion on the purpose and process of a constitutional convention was useful. The discussion though was not conclusive so it was agreed that **Phil** would look into how the discussion could be reopened and extended.

It was emphasised that we were using Loomio as a space for deliberation rather than decision-making. Outputs from Loomio discussions could be brought to the planning group for consideration. The planning group was sovereign.

4 Assessment of working group results and ways forward

There was some concern that the same people were active in more than one group and that we were spreading our capacity thinly. It was important to get more people involved and for everyone who signed up to working groups to take part where possible.

5 Articles of Association

We agreed that:

- i) We would be constituting Assemblies for Democracy (London) rather than the convention planning group or any new kind of overarching national group.
- ii) We would have both members and supporters (though we needed to define who these people were and their respective roles and responsibilities)
- iii) That there would be an AGM at which the members would be sovereign
- iv) Paul, Steve and Julie would meet as a working group, with a view to hold a teach in event and/ or a make a presentation on the current constitution at the next planning group meeting.

6. Financial report

We had £396 in the bank. A collection raised £69 towards the meeting room hire which cost £66.

7. Next meetings

The following dates were agreed:

- Sunday 9th October · Saturday 12th November and · Saturday 10th December.

8. Any other business

- Discussion of a mooted political independence principal remained outstanding.
- Paul said he would be speaking at an event on Devolution organised by Manchester Assemblies for Democracy later in the year.

PE/JT/ as at 11/9/2016