

CITIZENS' INITIATIVE AND REFERENDUM



A BROCHURE WITH PROPOSALS AND RESOURCES

**"Democracy Within Reach"**

campaign for direct democracy in Britain

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**Democracy within reach:  
Proposals, tools for change**  
a brochure with proposals and resources

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## Document I

### **Citizens' initiative, referendum and direct democracy Brief Introduction**

Many people have expressed discontent with the way democracy works and there are different opinions as to what should be done to improve it. In Britain there have been initial attempts to reform the second chamber of parliament and there is long-standing debate about how we should elect our members of parliament.

We propose another improvement, namely to introduce the right of citizens to make their own proposals or laws to be put to the people's vote and the right to change or veto laws passed by parliament. An agreed number of supporting signatures must be collected to start these procedures.

This type of "direct democracy", side by side with "representative democracy", is already well tried in Switzerland, the USA and elsewhere. New systems of communication such as internet may prove to be helpful for improving and reforming both types of democracy.

At present we are allowed to vote for candidates, parties and their promises once every few years. "Initiative and referendum" allows us to vote and decide directly on those important issues, problems and challenges of public affairs which we citizens select.

See related

**Principles of citizens' democracy**

**Basic Proposal: "Three Step" democracy**

## Document II

### Principles of citizens' democracy

# The Initiative

With the "initiative" a citizen or group has the right to put forward a proposal to introduce or change law. In order that a proposal will be put to the electorate (in a "referendum" or "ballot") an agreed number of endorsements ("signatures") must be collected and validated.

# The Referendum

If the required number of endorsements is obtained, there are two ways to proceed:

- 1) The proposal is put to the electorate in a referendum.
- 2) The proposal is first presented to parliament or local council, which must debate it. Parliament or council may adopt the proposal and pass it as law. Proposals which are rejected must be put to the electorate in a referendum. If a majority of the electorate votes for the proposal then it becomes law.

## Document III

### **Basic Proposal: "Three Step" democracy**

#### **NEW DEMOCRATIC PROCEDURES FOR GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND**

Our proposal, presented here in brief, for discussion, has a three-step procedure:

STEP 1. Initiative (citizens' proposal) which can lead to debate of the proposal by parliament. In order to proceed to Step 2 an agreed number of endorsements by fellow citizens ('signatures') must be collected without time limit or within a period which may be limited to, say, six months or one year. If parliament rejects the citizens' proposal then we can proceed to —————→

STEP 2. People's referendum demand. The procedure from here can vary. A simple application by the proposers may suffice to trigger a referendum, or the collection of further endorsements may be required. If the referendum demand succeeds, the referendum must be held within an agreed period, say six months —————→

STEP 3. Referendum. The decision of the electorate has the power of law.

This scheme has a number of advantageous features:

It encourages reforming and creative proposals to emerge -- an "ideas greenhouse" (attributed to Nordfors).

The best proposals compete and are selected to go forward only if they collect enough endorsement by (many) fellow citizens.

continued....

### **Basic Proposal: "Three Step" democracy ...continued**

The proposal goes to parliament (or local council, as appropriate) which is allowed a generous period during which to inform, debate and decide upon the proposal.

This system integrates parliamentary and citizens' democracy. It brings citizens and MPs together to consider and debate issues of real concern to the electorate. Negotiation often occurs.

The elected parliament may put forward its own proposal as an alternative to the citizens' proposal. The proposing group may accept this, or both proposals may be put to the people in referendum.

During the various stages and steps, which take many months, there is ample time and much opportunity for information about the proposal, public debate and deliberation of the issue (consider also the role of internet).

Comments may be sent to <[proposal@iniref.org](mailto:proposal@iniref.org)> Also you are invited to join Democr@cy Forum via <http://www.iniref.org> and start a discussion there.

## Document IV

**I&R****citizens' initiative and referendum****The case for introducing elements of direct democracy in Great Britain and Northern Ireland**

In an almost purely representative democracy such as the United Kingdom most people can contribute only by voting for an MP once every few years. Recently there have been moves to mitigate this lack of citizens' involvement in their own affairs by introducing consultative procedures such as panels, usually of a dozen or so people from different backgrounds, asked to consider matters such as an aspect of health care. Also, the changes involving proportional election systems, and the whole devolution process appear to be intended to improve the quality of representation of the will of constituents.

There are other, arguably more effective ways to improve representation in public affairs, namely those in which citizens represent themselves directly. Obviously, parliamentary systems, governments and administrations will not become redundant but, using already established methods, citizens can be enabled to intervene when they (that is, a reasonable quorum) so wish. Some of these methods of decision making are known as citizens' (law) initiative, referendum and recall (IRR -- see note below\*). Passive procedures, such as when the people of a European country are asked by their government if they want to join or leave the European Community, are not meant here. I am referring to procedures which are actively introduced by a large number of constituents, and to legislative proposals on which a majority of them decide.

continued ....



IRR offer some ways in which tried, effective "checks and balances" can be introduced into public affairs and decision making, involving public administration and parliamentary democracy. My proposal to introduce IRR does not of course suggest that parliament should be abolished or weakened. I suggest that on the contrary the whole system of governance would be strengthened. These reforms would give the voters a way to have more say in their own affairs if and when enough of them want it, without having to wait till the next election in order "to throw the blighters out" (a clumsy way to express creative wishes or discontent, often too late for many problem-issues). With IRR there can be a more refined, developed and focussed discourse of the people with their representatives and delegates. Further, it has been suggested that politicians and ministers tend to respect the wishes of their constituents more, merely because the possibility of citizen intervention in parliamentary process exists.

#### Information and Deliberation

It is often asserted that the directer forms of democracy such as IRR do not allow adequate consideration of the issue at stake. Agreed, a rapid process conducted like an opinion survey might gather many unreflected replies. But that is not what is proposed here. There are very good ways to build in plenty of information, discussion, and debating time (summed up as "deliberation") into the processes of citizen-initiated lawmaking. For instance:

The time from launching initiative to decision is several months at least.

continued ....

The two or three (depending on method) phases of the citizens' initiative are accompanied by dissemination of information and public debate. An agreed percentage of citizen votes must be collected to start the initiative in order to put a law before parliament. If it is rejected, then many more votes must be collected in order to start and carry through a public referendum. Proponents of the initiative must engage the public in debate, or they will not succeed in mobilising enough support to take the process further.

Similarly, opponents of the initiative will try to mobilise dissent by disseminating counter arguments, thus creating further debate.

Information about the issue at stake must be freely available to any citizen who wants it.

Public debate and information can nowadays be aided by information and communication technology such as e-mail, World Wide Web, on-line discussion; not forgetting television, radio and print.

Electronic collection of signatures and electronic voting in referenda, for instance using the bank teller system or Internet, would speed up matters. But this not essential.

\*Note. The abbreviation IRR refers to Citizens' Law Initiative, Referendum and Recall of elected representatives. I and R means simply "initiative and referendum".

Dr. Michael Macpherson, July 1999.

Document V

**report in progress**  
**PROSPECTS FOR MORE DEMOCRACY IN GREAT BRITAIN**  
**Michael Wallace-Macpherson**

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Applying the 1972 Local Government Act for parish referendums.

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Learning democracy from the cradle to the ballot? Room for improvement.

The campaigners.

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**Chapter 5. Prospects for success of proposals to introduce more direct democracy**

The full text of this report may be purchased on-line, printed version may be also be obtained from I&R, E-mail <bookshop@iniref.org>

## Document VI

**Cautious reform, radical change or status quo?**  
**Some recent opinions on democracy**

Why meddle with a system of governance, established political parties, hallowed parliament, copied the world over, which work so well? Our democracy has evolved over hundreds of years, Britain has been called "the mother of parliaments": Surely we need no more than minor modernisation?

We have collected opinions of experts and critics of democracy -- scroll down the page or use your "search" tool to find a particular commentator from the list.

Weir, Stuart  
 Wallis, Diana  
 Thomas, Mark  
 Smith, Nigel  
 Smith, Douglas  
 Seward, Michael  
 Referenda Society, The  
 Mulgan, Geoff  
 Meacher, Michael  
 Harvey, John  
 Budge, Ian  
 Beedham, Brian  
 Adonis, Andrew

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"Jack Straw once described our government system as 'executive democracy' and I thought that was quite a telling phrase. I think it does encapsulate the attitude of those who rule, not only at national

but also at local level."

"All over Europe there are provisions for citizens' initiatives, often law-making initiatives where groups of ordinary citizens can put forward proposals to be seriously considered in the political arena. Why not do that?

"When I was advising the Public Administration Select Committee on quangos in the UK, we suggested that there should be a place for people to go on quangos by lot. Why not? The government absolutely rejected that out of hand. If you suggest new ideas in this country, people think you're potty but it really is vitally important we do begin to experiment with these things."

POWER Inquiry Witness Session, London 9 December 2004  
**Professor Stuart Weir**, Director of Democratic Audit at the Human Rights Centre, Essex University and a Visiting Professor with the Government Department, Essex University.

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"The evidence from Saturday's march is that people want to do something. They want to be involved more directly in the decision making process or at the very least to be able to influence it. But sadly they feel completely marginalised by our present political system.

"Discussed at our conference\* were proposals about how this sort of direct action could be linked into the political system, constructing mechanisms through the use of people's initiatives and referendums to give shape to citizens' views.

"The conference\* heard from two speakers from Switzerland, where there is a long tradition of so-called 'people's initiatives', that is, the possibility of signatures being collected so that a matter can be properly debated and voted by all residents whether it be in a parish, region or indeed the whole country. This can then lead to a change in the law."

\* A Forum in York, organised by local Liberal Democrat Euro MP, Diana Wallis and the Initiative and Referendum Institute (Europe), Amsterdam.

**Diana Wallis**, Member of the European Parliament for Yorkshire and the Humber.

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Mark Thomas, who had merriment with the law insisting those who elect not to pay inheritance tax on objets d 'art allow the public to view them, has unearthed another obscure piece of legislation. Under the Powers and Constitutions of Local Councils, 10 people present at a parish meeting can demand a poll on any issue, which the district council must then hold on similar lines to an election. This the firemen have done, calling for a referendum on whether the people of Essex want the cuts. Although the result would not be legally binding, it would be vastly embarrassing for the council... So much so, indeed, that the Chief Fire Officer has suddenly made an offer which the union executive will recommend its members accept. A victory, then, for democracy In Essex. We look forward to hearing more of this enchanting regulation. "We intend," says Mark Thomas, "to make full use of this legislation." Report of **Mark Thomas**, comedian.

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**Nigel Smith**, VoxScot, Campaigner for Scottish devolution "advocates the use of referendums to supplement representative democracy".

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**Douglas Smith** in The Ecologist writes that we in Britain have "fallen out of love with conventional politics" and believes that Swiss-style direct democracy could end the current crisis of political legitimacy. [Read his article.](#)

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"In my view, if Dahl had actually pursued one of his strategies - to hypothesise over feasible institutions arising from his own criteria - he would not have restricted himself to the institutions of polyarchy, but would have considered -- as a central part of his task -- mechanisms such as referendums, initiative and recall." In: Direct and Deliberative Democracy, paper for presentation at the European Consortium for Political Research ECPR Joint Sessions, Copenhagen April 2000. **Michael Saward**, The Open University, UK.

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"In the United Kingdom, Mori polls in 1991 and 1995, showed 77 per cent favoured referenda on a particular issue when raised by petition. If direct democracy had obtained in this country prior to 1972, the European Communities Bill which, among other things, voided the legislative supremacy of Parliament in favour of Europe, would have been subjected automatically to sanction by referendum, before becoming an Act. Similarly, popular initiative would have enabled votes to be taken on measures concerning education, health, housing, transport and other matters that impinge on our daily lives."

Cited from: Next step: the case for direct democracy 2000. **The Referenda Society**.

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Bring power back under control

This crisis can only be overcome by sweeping democratic reforms

Even more important is to draw on best democratic experience from abroad. In Switzerland, for example, citizens have a right to call a referendum on any issue they like, so long as they gather enough signatures. Indeed, any new law brought before the Swiss parliament can be challenged by the voters before it is enacted. If 1% of the population sign up to a proposal within an 18-month period, it can be voted on by the public and, if passed, become law. This really is direct democracy in action.

Suppose, more modestly, we were to require a 5% threshold: that would require nearly 2 million people to sign up - an exacting demand, but by no means a prohibitive one. It would radically transform our politics.

Quoted from an article by **Michael Meacher**, The Guardian Wednesday October 6, 2004. Michael Meacher is Labour MP for Oldham West and Royton; he was environment minister 1997-2003

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Our 20th Century democracy allowed us to choose our politicians, - local or national - and then required those chosen to take all the communal decisions for us until the next elections fall due some years hence. Proponents of Direct Democracy believe that in the Twenty First Century we can do things better than that. We believe that it is now both desirable and possible for citizens to take part in the decision making process themselves, rather than always relying upon the selected few to do it for them. **John Harvey**, The Direct Democracy Campaign

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The traditional challenge of direct democracy is to the limited participation of citizens in their own government. Why should responsible adults be debarred from deciding policies for themselves, on public as on private matters? Democracy justifies itself as empowering citizens, making government their own rather than an external or imposed authority. So it is hard to defend restrictions on democratic citizens' power to decide what governments should do and how they should operate.

The new challenge of direct democracy lies in the startling fact that it is now technically possible. ...

Professor **Ian Budge**. Department of Government, University of Essex. From his book The New Challenge of Direct Democracy.

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### THE TEST IS: WHO GIVES THE ORDER?

It has to be the right kind of referendum, of course. A referendum organized by the government, posing a question of the government's choice in the words the government finds most convenient, is seldom much help to democracy.

### IT MEANS GOVERNMENT BY THE PEOPLE, AND WE ARE THE PEOPLE

This survey argues that the next big change in human affairs will probably not be a matter of economics, or electronics, or military science; it will be a change in the supposedly humdrum world of politics. The coming century could see, at last, the full flowering of the idea of democracy. The democratic system of politics, which first took widespread root in the 19th century, and then in the 20th century beat off the attacks of both fascism and communism, may in the 21st century realize that it has so far been living, for understandable reasons, in a state of arrested development, but that those reasons no longer apply; and so democracy can set about completing its growth.

The Economist magazine of London, England, December 21st 1996. [Article](#)

**Brian Beedham**, former Foreign Editor, The Economist magazine.

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In 1994 Andrew Adonis and Geoff Mulgan called for:

- a wholesale redefinition of the role of politicians so that powerholders can be held more clearly accountable for their performance
- combining representative with direct democracy in the form of referendums, rights of initiative and recall, and voter vetoes on parliamentary legislation

Back to Greece: the scope for direct democracy. Demos Quarterly Issue 3/1994. The article states: **Andrew Adonis** is a former Fellow

of Nuffield College Oxford, and is currently industry correspondent at The Financial Times. **Geoff Mulgan** is Director of Demos.

## IDEAS AND "TOOLS" FOR REFORM

### **Aims of the I&R Campaign**

Our campaign is called Citizens' Initiative and Referendum I&R

The aims are:

- to inform and educate about citizens' initiative and referendum (I and R) and direct democracy,
- to promote a public debate about I and R, and direct democracy, in Britain,
- to work for the introduction of elements of direct democracy, such as I and R, and recall of elected representatives, into the British system of government.

# Historic Document

## People's Proposal to Renew Democracy

date: May to July 1999

from: Michael Macpherson

to: newsgroups, forums

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

I want to gather people's opinions and encourage discussion about the chances to improve real participation in public decision making, democracy and governance.

Imagine there would be a people's referendum for the citizen's right to take part in public affairs. This could be a new way to revive democracy, and the debate about it, in Britain (maybe elsewhere, too). "Taking part" means, for instance, being able to put a new law before parliament and the people, to cancel an existing law or to dismiss an M.P. who has represented her or his constituents badly.

Below is a suggestion for the text of a people's referendum (called "Proposal"). If enough citizens want the referendum to go ahead, volunteers will be needed to organise the proceedings and collect the signed ballot papers. The latter could be done both "on paper" and "on-line".

In brief, the suggestion is "Have a referendum for the right to referenda!"

continued ....

**PEOPLE'S PROPOSAL TO RENEW DEMOCRACY**  
**(with Rider, below)**

We the undersigned propose that a law be passed in parliament which enables and provides finance for the following forms of democracy at all levels of government from local to national, these forms of democracy to be initiated by a fair and reasonable percentage of the population, with decisions being made by an appropriate majority of voters:

- 1) Citizens' Initiative: Initiation of laws to be voted upon by the legislative body be it parliament, assembly or council.
- 2) Referendum: The people decide, for instance if the legislative has decided against the citizens' initiatives in 1).
- 3) Cancellation or modification of existing laws by citizens' initiative or referendum.
- 4) Recall of elected public delegates, representatives and officials at any time during the usual period of office: The people decide.

A "green paper" outlining the hereto relevant practices of democracy in other countries and describing different reform options and the reasons for these shall be rapidly published and made freely available (gratis) via wide-area computer networks such as Internet.

Signatures .....  
 .....  
 .....

**Rider**

By signing the foregoing proposal I mandate my Member of Parliament to help introduce and support an appropriate Bill in Parliament. In future my vote will go ONLY to those candidates for parliamentary office who promise to support the proposal.

Signatures .....  
 .....  
 .....

## **Ideas for action**

- ideas for election run-up periods
- thoughts for the longer haul

### ideas for the (next, local or country-wide) election run-up period

- 1 Ask representatives of political parties about their attitudes to direct democracy.
- 2 Write to head offices and approach local constituency branches.
- 3 Suggest that they should indicate support for I&R in their election manifestos, if they have not already done so.
- 4 Show them the "People's Proposal to Renew Democracy" and ask them to introduce a similar bill in the House of Commons and in the local or county council.
- 5 Consider voting ONLY for those candidates who pledge to work for the introduction of I and R if they get elected
- 6 Give special attention to candidates in borderline and "mega-star" constituencies, and those with ministerial ambitions
- 7 Stand as a direct-democracy candidate in a local or country election

## 8 **I&R**each out to people and groups (see below)

### Thoughts for the longer haul

Ask ourselves "What must be done to promote I and R in Britain?" and prepare a list of aims and tasks.

Suggestions:

9 Inform family, friends, colleagues, about existing resources and proposals e.g. the I&R website <http://www.iniref.org/> and Direct Democracy Campaign

10 Reach out to schools, churches, sports clubs, trade unions and professions, unemployed, self-employed, colleges and universities, other groups and "people in the street" (and pub).

11 Persuade your own leisure/work group or organisation to support I&R.

12 Design an I&R logo. Volunteer as Webmaster , Web site designer, internet fundraiser ....

13 Find ways to produce (or locate) printed information, e.g. brochures, booklets about I&R. These could contain brief history, outline practice, and show how I&R might work in Britain.

**14** Consider commissioning one or more studies of the history and practice of I and R, in order to produce rich material which can be put to different uses.

Aspects such as:

- a) current state of I and R in Britain
- b) I and R examples from other countries
- c) potential of digital communication to enhance I and R
- d) history of direct democracy (DD) in Britain

**15** Organise conferences about I and R in several different regions of Britain.

**16** Seek journalists who want to write about I and R, plus magazine and newspaper editors who agree to publish our materials or a commissioned article by one or more of us. Try to convince TV journalists to make programmes about how I and R works, e.g. recent spectacular results in Thuringia and Hamburg, also 1995 in Bavaria; the very extensive Swiss experience – a hundred or more years of DD. Look into the human stories behind the campaigns and the enthusiastic participation.

**17** Ask the owners of (especially frequently visited) internet websites to display a prominent link to our www sites. How about a "Green (or Orange) Ribbon" campaign for I and R ?

**18** Put an I and R link in your e-mail "sig". Spread direct democracy via mobile 'phone "text"

**19** Build a list of experts on I and R, who are willing to answer questions and/or to speak at meetings.

**20** Vote for more democracy and register your comments at  
<http://www.ipetitions.com/campaigns/i-and-r.gb>

**21** Demonstrate support for I and R in Britain, e.g. persuade other people to vote for I and R, in the pilot "referendum for the right to referendum", on paper or on-line (collect signatures) <http://www.iniref.org/campaign.html>

**22** Start a membership organisation, club or movement with the aim to promote I and R in Britain.

**23** Volunteer to help, e.g. work up campaign materials, design internet presentations, fundraise, donate.

**24** Launch an I&R group in your area

a sensible project for the run-up period to parliamentary elections.....

Why not start a group for more democracy and real public participation, based for example in your town, city or county? Network with campaigners in other regions.

The idea is to introduce elements of binding direct democracy into all levels of governance: village, district, county and country; and applying to major decisions of or about the European Union.

continued ....



We think it is best to focus on democratic methods and procedures which have already proved their worth so suggest

**Initiative and Referendum, I and R**

This means direct democratic decision-making by citizens on issues which they select and judge to be important. It does not mean abolishing political parties and parliament, on the contrary it can allow co-operation and consensus. It would alter - for the better - the way public decisions are made and the way policy is carried out. And with the instruments of I and R we the people can make and change our constitution.

I and R appeals to people whose views span the whole democratic political spectrum.

For more information write to [info@iniref.org](mailto:info@iniref.org) or telephone +49 30 262 3768

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## **Local ('Parish') Referendum in England and Wales**

Probably few people know of our rights to initiate community and parish referendums. Regulations and practice, which apply only in Wales and England, are outlined below.

The following guide is gleaned from several sources. It should help you to get started but we cannot guarantee its accuracy.

### **HOW TO ORGANISE A LOCAL REFERENDUM FOR YOUR PARISH OR COMMUNITY**

The law which entitles local communities to a referendum is part 3, schedule 12, paragraph 18, sub-paragraphs 4 and 5 of the Local Government Act of 1972. In Wales, the reference is part 5, paragraph 34, sub-paragraphs 4 and 5. You have to live in a Civic Parish Council in England or a Community Council in Wales. These are mainly in rural areas, but if you are in any doubt then check with your local council.

Here's what you do... Decide on and draft the question that you want to put to the people in a referendum. Then, you and at least 5 other parish or community residents need to contact your parish or community council, arrange a parish meeting and advertise it locally.

continued ....

**Local ('Parish') Referendum in England and Wales, continued.**

At the meeting you have to call a vote on the proposal to hold a referendum. At least 10 people, or a third of those who are at the meeting, must vote in favour. Assuming success, go to your local district council offices, and submit your demand for a referendum. Tell them you are invoking your right to do this under part 3, schedule 12, paragraph 18, sub-paragraphs 4 and 5 of the Local Government Act of 1972, or if you live in Wales, refer to part 5, paragraph 34, sub-paragraphs 4 and 5.

The Council should contact you within a week, and the referendum has to take place between 14 and 25 days after you submit your request. You must publicise the referendum yourselves. The result is not legally binding on the council but it can have important effects on local affairs.

Further information about citizens' referendums can be obtained from:

The National Association of Local Councils,  
108 Great Russell Street,  
London, WC1B 3LD.  
Tel: 0207 637 1865 <nalc@nalc.gov.uk>

Friends of the Earth <http://www.foe.co.uk/>

I&R <http://www.iniref.org>

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## **Citizens claim Initiative and Referendum rights with the Ballot for Direct Democracy in Britain**

### **Introduction**

VOTE FOR MORE DEMOCRACY Vote yourself then help to motivate others via internet and on paper

Voting by "ordinary citizens" in a referendum "from below" may seem to be a waste of time. That ain't necessarily so. There are some good reasons to launch and to assist a "referendum for the right to referendum". For example:

We aim to show that many people support the proposals to renovate our archaic method of governing ourselves. By publishing the results of the ballot we hope to demonstrate that there is strong interest in direct democracy. Others will then be more likely to take up the ideas and help to spread them across the countries and to people of many different backgrounds.

The idea of introducing elements of direct democracy will be spread. People will talk about them. Ways to progress towards a practice of citizens' initiative and referendum will be found.

The potential of wide area computer networks to assist democracy will be tested and positive innovations in the application of these may result.

Our "print and distribute" offers (e.g. for the Ballot Paper) will reach people who are not connected to Internet etc.. This will cross over the "digital divide" and be helpful for people who prefer an old-fashioned communication medium.

Internet Vote: Our WWW "polling station" is hosted by I-petition.com. There you can read our appeal and sign a ballot for the introduction of citizens' referendum in Britain. And you can record your own comments. Visit <  
<http://www.ipetitions.com/campaigns/i-and-r.gb>>

## Ballot for Direct Democracy in Britain

Vote and comment at the  
POLLING STATION I-petition

Traditional Vote: DOWNLOAD the ballot paper "Ballot for Direct Democracy in Britain" as a print-ready pdf file. <http://www.iniref.org/referendum-gb.pdf>

After printing you can photocopy the ballot paper, approach people asking for their signature, distribute the ballot paper to individuals and groups. Collect the signed ballot papers, count and record the results, store the ballot papers and send the result by e-mail to Referendum Votes. <[ballot@iniref.org](mailto:ballot@iniref.org)>

### Preamble

# Ballot for Direct Democracy in Britain

### The Ballot Proposal

**The people of Britain and Northern Ireland shall have the right to call a binding referendum on important public issues by collecting a previously agreed number of signatures, and the right to put forward a public proposal by citizens' initiative.**

### Why make these reforms?

We the people of Britain currently do NOT have the right to call a referendum on an important matter of public concern. A referendum may be organised by the government but the result is not legally binding, only advisory.

The reform proposed here is to establish the right of citizens to introduce their own proposals or laws to be put to binding referendum, and the right of the electorate to veto laws passed by parliament or council. Using the citizens' initiative a law proposal can be put before parliament, if rejected there it will go

to referendum of the people. An agreed number of supporting signatures must be collected to start these procedures. This type of "direct democracy", side by side with "representative democracy", is already well tried in Switzerland, many states of the USA and elsewhere.

The reforms are proposed for all levels of government from parish, to city to country.

Further information may be obtained from  
Citizens' Initiative and Referendum I&R <http://www.iniref.org/>  
or from [info@iniref.org](mailto:info@iniref.org)

On the ballot paper, you are asked to show your support for the introduction of citizens' direct democracy in Great Britain and Northern Ireland. We invite you to help by collecting signatures yourself.

Signature counts will be published online and made available to mass media. Names, addresses (postal, e-mail) will *\*not\** be published in order to avoid unwanted communications and advertising.

***Sponsor Citizens' Initiative and Referendum I&R <http://www.iniref.org> We provide campaign resources for direct democracy such as citizens' initiative, referendum, and recall in Great Britain and Northern Ireland.***

**See Sample Ballot Paper, below**

## Sample Ballot Paper

# BALLOT FOR DIRECT DEMOCRACY IN BRITAIN

**The people of Britain and Northern Ireland shall have the right to call a binding referendum on important public issues by collecting a previously agreed number of signatures, and the right to put forward a public proposal by citizens' initiative.**

[illegible]