



Political and Constitutional Reform Committee

Oral evidence: [Voter engagement in the UK](#), HC 232 Thursday 10 July 2014

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Written evidence from witnesses:

- [Wales Governance Centre, Cardiff University](#)
- [Dr Cristina Leston-Bandeira, University of Hull](#)
- [Professors Susan Banducci and Daniel Stevens, University of Exeter](#)

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Members present: Mr Graham Allen (Chair); Mr Christopher Chope; Tracey Crouch; Mark Durkan; Fabian Hamilton; David Morris; Chris Ruane; Mr Andrew Turner

Questions 615 - 690

Witness: **Dr Rebecca Rumbul**, Wales Governance Centre, Cardiff University, gave evidence.

Q615 Chair: Welcome, Rebecca. You know what we're doing: a general inquiry into voter engagement and participation. It is really nice of you to come along and talk to us today. We would love to hear your views, and we thank you for the stuff that you have already sent to us. Would you like to go straight into questions, or do you want to make an opening statement of any sort?

Dr Rumbul: I am happy to go straight into questions.

Chair: Thank you. David?

Q616 David Morris: Thank you, Chair. The written evidence from the Wales Governance Centre focuses on younger voters aged 18 to 29. Why did you decide to focus your submission on that age group?

Dr Rumbul: This is a particularly distinct age group. Obviously, I know that your inquiry is into voters of all ages, but there are specific circumstances, issues and needs relating to that particular age group that are less relevant to those who are slightly older. This age group has particular barriers to engaging with voting.

Q617 David Morris: Your submission makes a distinction between lifestyle and generational factors that may affect the engagement of younger voters. What is so important about distinguishing between these two things?

Dr Rumbul: Well, lifestyle effects are not necessarily too much to worry about. If you look at young people under 30, they are highly mobile, they move between residences, which are often shared and with short contracts, and they travel a lot. The priority for this age group is getting on in the world and getting equipped for later life, so these are all barriers even to registering to vote, let alone actually voting on the day. Such things prevent young people from taking up the opportunity to vote. However, if these young people had positive experiences of political engagement when growing up through their families or in social groups, it is expected that these people, once they are in a more stable situation, will take on an adult role and vote as they take on other adult responsibilities, such as getting a mortgage or having children.

Q618 Chris Ruane: Rebecca, the Electoral Office for Northern Ireland has more leeway or greater independence than those of Wales and Scotland, and it has come up with some innovative policies to get young people on to the register. It took young persons' registration from 25% to 65%. Do you think that Northern Ireland's ability to have such pilots and experiment should be extended to Scotland and Wales so that we can have four areas of the country where best policy can be developed and cross-pollination between nations can occur?

Dr Rumbul: I think that the devolved nations provide a great opportunity to be policy laboratories, and that has been shown in various policy areas. I do not know the specific interventions that have occurred in Northern Ireland, so I cannot say for definite that I recommend that they should be rolled out. Certainly, if such experimentation shows that they have a positive effect on voter registration for young people, I would support that.

Q619 Chris Ruane: Have you made any assessment of the Bite the Ballot campaign to register young people? Registration for young people on the UK mainland is 55%, and of that 55%, 44% vote, so there is 25% engagement. Bite the Ballot can go into a school and have 100% registrations for 16, 17 and 18-year-olds at 25p per registration, as opposed to the Electoral Commission's registration at £5 to £78. Do you think Bite the Ballot has a role to play, or a bigger role to play, and should it be funded to carry on that excellent work, which is so efficient and effective?

Dr Rumbul: Yes, I am very aware of Bite the Ballot and the work it is doing, and I completely support it. I think it is quite innovative and reaches young people on a slightly different level from the Electoral Commission. Obviously, funding is a matter for you, not me, but I certainly think that if it can show value for money, and if the evidence is there that it can achieve greater engagement at a lower cost, I think it is absolutely the right thing to do.

Q620 David Morris: We have heard that there are many reasons—both practical and political—why young people are less likely than those in other age groups to participate in elections. Is that a new phenomenon, or have young people always been less likely to vote than older people, but pick up the habit as they get older? What correlation would you have from those two age groups? Is it something that you would say they would evolve into, and if so, why would you see it that way?

Dr Rumbul: As I said previously, and as I think I said in my evidence, I think it is key in terms of lifestyle effects that young people have positive experiences of political engagement as they are growing up. This is generally linked to people who are resource-rich, shall we say, rather than

resource-poor people. When I am talking about that, I am talking about people who perhaps have a higher level of education and a higher family income. Those people who have a negative experience of politics growing up, or maybe no experience at all, are much less likely to engage as they come into the adult world and develop their adult experiences later in life. Those people are less likely to vote, because there was no reinforcement of political relevance as they were growing up.

Q621 David Morris: So do you think there are reasons that mean that the current generation of younger voters are not only less likely to vote now, but will probably continue to be less likely to vote as they grow older?

Dr Rumbul: I do not think that it is a terminal decline, but I do think that there is a growing gap. A lot of the data that I have looked at show that there are people—again, these resource-rich people—who will end up voting as they get older, but there is a growing group of young people who will probably never reach the point where they engage in voting. It has been shown that the younger you can get people into a polling booth, the more likely they are to continue voting as they get older.

Q622 Mr Chope: You say: “Young people’s perception of government and their own level of political efficacy is heavily influenced by the representation of government and politicians across media platforms.” There is nothing very sensational about that, but do you think that it is particularly true of younger voters, compared with other voters?

Dr Rumbul: The studies that I have looked at have shown that younger people are slightly more susceptible to the kind of face-value portrayals in the media. I think slightly older people tend to look more at the evidence and to be a bit more pensive about what is provided to them through certain media channels, whereas young people tend to take it more as face value. If you have negative things that are being reinforced through your social networks and on television, that is probably more likely to reinforce negative feelings about the political class in young people.

Q623 Mr Chope: Is all the material you have presented based on secondary sources rather than your own direct research?

Dr Rumbul: Primarily, the research I have quoted to you is published research carried out by other researchers, and some of it is taken from anecdotal evidence from when I worked as the manager of the young persons charity for several years.

Q624 Mr Chope: Because you also say: “Studies show that use of internet, talk radio and television in accessing political information actually increases political cynicism in young people, and has a negative effect on political engagement”, so the modern media are having a negative effect.

Dr Rumbul: It can do. Again, it depends on the particular media that the young person is consuming, but there is research to show that if they are constantly exposed to stories that are amplified by social media, that can reinforce negative attitudes. The positive thing is that the people who use it and are engaged in politics and political activity are increasingly using it more creatively to mobilise each other.

Q625 Mr Chope: But there is reduced activity among young people engaged in politics. There is a sharp decline in the number of young people who belong to or actively support political parties. What do you think can be done to change that?

Dr Rumbul: Primarily young people are stepping back from identifying with political parties because they don't identify with the people in them. Many of the politicians they see on television are very distant to them, in terms of their behaviour, appearance and language. Added to that, being a member of a political party in public life is increasingly viewed with a certain amount of suspicion, and being identified with a certain party affects the legitimacy of what people are saying.

Q626 Mr Chope: Why is that?

Dr Rumbul: I think it is mostly to do with the fact that partisanship is viewed as suspicious because you have an agenda that is not independent.

Q627 Mr Chope: So really the whole way in which we set up our politics in this country, which is that people put forward programmes for a general election and say, "Vote for my party on this programme," does not chime at all with young people, because they want a separate agenda for every subject and they are suspicious of collectivism.

Dr Rumbul: Well, we are generalising, but I think young people are far more interested in individual, customisable groups. It looks like the political engagement that young people have these days is more about single issues, and is far more light touch. You are much less likely to find a young person wanting to join a party that has specific views on a whole range of things. You are much more likely to find a young person who has a specific view on something that is supported by the Liberal Democrats, but has a different view about something else that is championed by the Conservative party.

Q628 Mr Chope: So if that leads to low voter engagement, that is not necessarily a bad thing.

Dr Rumbul: I wouldn't necessarily say that.

Q629 Mr Chope: People may say, "I support that party on that issue," but they have only one vote in an election. If they think there are good things and bad things about all the political parties, they may choose to abstain or not engage. That is not a bad thing, is it?

Dr Rumbul: I would say that young people abstaining in large numbers is probably a bad thing, because if they cannot choose between the parties and their solution is not to vote, you are going to get a large section of the population who are failing to register their opinion.

Q630 Mr Chope: But aren't these young people being more discriminating? They are saying, "Well, each of the political parties is like a curate's egg, so we're not going to sign up to any particular one." That might be regarded as a healthy trend among young people's views of what is happening in public life.

Dr Rumbul: Well, it could be, but I suppose that if you follow it through to adulthood, if you continue to view politics in that kind of mix and match way, we are going to end up in a position where we don't have anyone in Parliament.

Q631 Mr Chope: The alternative might be that instead of having strong political parties with internal discipline and organised programmes, you would have the promotion of more individuals and independent candidates. Do you think that would chime better with young people? Do you think that if there were more independent candidates standing, there would be higher engagement?

Dr Rumbul: I don't have any evidence to support that, but I certainly think we have moved into the age of the cult of the personality over political parties, so perhaps.

Q632 Mr Chope: Is there anything that the media can do to alter things?

Dr Rumbul: The media tend to need stories that people will be interested in. They have to frame things in a certain way to actually get some viewers, so obviously at certain times, I wouldn't say that the media were a complete champion of the political system. I think that the media could portray things in a more positive light, or put some more positive stories out there, but that is not for me to decide, but for the media.

Q633 Chair: Rebecca, thank you very much. Is there anything that you would like to add, having heard a few questions from members of the Committee?

Dr Rumbul: I would like to raise the issue of technology. We have talked a bit about the media, but young people are far, far greater consumers of technology than slightly older voters. I honestly think that a move towards increasing the technological capacity of the voting system would make a big difference in engaging young people.

A few years back, an experiment was done in the States that involved about 61 million Facebook users. It showed that positive, small things, such as putting an "I voted" button on Facebook and having reminders, and seeing that your friends voted, made a significant difference in voter turnout among that younger age group. Similarly, being able to register electronically and vote electronically would make a difference. Obviously, that may not happen in the next couple of years but, in the longer term, a move to increasing the amount of technology involved in the process is extremely important.

Q634 Chair: You join us on the day when we are launching a consultation document entitled *A new Magna Carta?*, which asks whether we should have a written constitution. There will be six months' public consultation. To reinforce your point, the traditional summary cliché of the American constitution is that it was drawn up by 40 white guys in a room in Philadelphia—admittedly 227 years ago, so we will not hold that against them. We have the possibility of having 40 million founding fathers and mothers, if people want to respond to our consultation, which is open until 1 January. The aim is to encourage particularly young people who have not been engaged in politics or may feel a little bit estranged from it. Hopefully, that consultation will be a contribution, and perhaps an example of what you are saying in terms of the use of social media.

Dr Rumbul: If you can express to young people what it means, I am certain that they will engage with it, but they need the tools to be able to do so, and given the education in schools about

politics and the constitution, I don't think that a lot of young people would feel that they had the expertise or the knowledge to contribute positively. Organisations such as Bite the Ballot that are increasing education about those matters in school will be vital to the process.

Chair: We would be very interested if schools, sixth forms, colleges and universities used the document almost as a text to learn about our constitution and to comment on the role of the Prime Minister and the role of the House of Commons, the second Chamber, local government and so on. Perhaps we can spread the word through social media.

Q635 Chris Ruane: You gave us some excellent examples in just a couple of sentences. Could you give us a written paper on the best examples that you have spotted of the use of social media to engage young people from around the world? If you could supply that with links, perhaps we could include specific examples in our report.

You mentioned that you could have an "I have voted" button on a Facebook or Twitter account. Lord Alf Dubs, a Labour Lord, has suggested to the Electoral Commission that we should follow the American example. In America, they have badges: when you go to vote, they give you a badge or sticker saying "I have voted" that you can stick on your lapel—it doesn't say who you voted for, just that you have used your democratic right to vote. Would that be something—an actual badge, as well as a virtual badge—that you think might engage young or even old people?

Dr Rumbul: Possibly. I think it might be very quick to counterfeit. I am not sure about the physical side. The really interesting thing about the Facebook experiment in the States was that it wasn't just a button that said, "I have voted"; it was that when you accessed your Facebook feed, you could see all your friends who had voted, and that—the fact that their close friends and relatives had done so—was a catalyst for people actually going out and voting. There was a control group, and just having an "I voted" button did not do much: it wasn't about you saying to everyone else that you'd voted, but being part of that close familial or social group.

Q636 Tracey Crouch: I have a really quick question. Who do you think needs to take ownership of trying to improve voter engagement: the Government, Parliament, political parties, the Electoral Commission? Who should own the issue of getting more people out to vote?

Dr Rumbul: I think it is a societal issue, so I don't think the responsibility should lie with any particular institution. There are things that can be done by all the institutions you just mentioned. Political parties are struggling; they want to engage people, but do not really know how. As I said, technology would be a huge, huge tool in improving voter engagement; obviously, that is something that needs to be done by the Electoral Commission and here in Parliament.

Q637 Tracey Crouch: But it is a generational thing, isn't it? If you try to engage people via technology at the younger end of the age spectrum, you might actually disengage those at the older end of the spectrum.

Dr Rumbul: Yes. I am not proposing a wholesale move to digital, because you would exclude a certain part of the population, because they did not have access to that kind of technology, but including it in the process, in voting, would be very positive. It is something for all the institutions to look at and work together on, I think.

Chair: Rebecca, thank you very much for coming in today and for your evidence. We are going to continue taking evidence, today and on other occasions. This is a really important question at any time, but not least coming up to a general election, so thank you.

Examination of Witnesses

Witnesses: **Dr Cristina Leston-Bandeira**, University of Hull, **Professor Susan Banducci**, University of Exeter, and **Professor Daniel Stevens**, University of Exeter, gave evidence.

Chair: Welcome. I think that you know what we are doing at the moment—conducting an inquiry into voter engagement and participation. Thank you for submitting written evidence and coming along today. Would you like to say something to start us off? If you are happy to go straight to questions, we will move on.

Q638 Tracey Crouch: I wanted to start with questions about inequality of turnout. Susan, your evidence mentioned very similar points about issues relating to age, socio-economic status and various other factors, but how significant do you think this inequality is, and why should we be worried about it?

Professor Banducci: I am happy to take that first. It is a significant problem and there is concern that, as turnout declines, this inequality becomes even greater. It is one of the fundamental aspects of any study of political behaviour that across the board factors such as education and income are related to turnout, and that those with lower levels of these are less likely to turn out.

Our suggestion is that any focus on any reform or action not only takes into consideration the impact on turnout overall, but takes a look at how it influences the composition of the electorate and how it might influence different segments of the electorate. Some reforms, for example, might affect higher socio-economic status groups more than lower economic status groups. This inequality in turnout, as others have argued, is important because it affects interest articulation—what sorts of issues get on the agenda. There is a suggestion that it might also influence policy outcomes, so it is important in that sense. Overall, it probably affects the sense of democratic legitimacy if we have inequality in the electorate.

Q639 Tracey Crouch: Daniel, do you have anything to add to that?

Professor Stevens: Not much. I would concur with all of that. The argument that is sometimes made—I have particularly heard it made about low-turnout elections in America—is that people do not vote because they are satisfied, but there is no good evidence for that. If that were the case, we would expect that the people who do not turn out are those who have the most reason to be satisfied, which is not what we see. As Susan says and as you have implied, there are all these inequalities, and it is the people who we would expect to be least satisfied who often do not vote. There is a natural inclination for elected officials to pay most attention to the voters. If the voters are skewed in a certain direction, we think that that affects policy outcomes, too. So that is a concern, as well as the legitimacy argument.

Q640 Tracey Crouch: Politicians probably focus most of their attention on voters, which is quite often seen as a criticism. I suppose it is a vicious circle that if your policies are not focused on those who do not come out and vote—as you say, the least-satisfied—they are never going to come out and vote.

Professor Stevens: Right. That is most often said about young people in particular.

Q641 Tracey Crouch: Your written evidence indicates that the reforms that are intended to make participation easier would not necessarily reduce the inequality in turnout, which I think you touched on in an earlier response, so what approach needs to be taken to make elections more representative of the population as a whole?

Professor Banducci: There's a lot of different factors, and I am sure that you have heard about many of them. Both individual characteristics and the context of elections influence whether people vote. There is a distinction that can be made between the reforms that facilitate voting or make it more convenient and those that are focused on making voting more meaningful for voters or allowing voters to understand that there is something at stake in the election. A lot of the research focuses on the factors that look at making voting more convenient, such as postal voting and relaxing absentee voting requirements. The people who tend to take advantage of such opportunities tend to be those who are resource rich and who are more likely to vote anyway. In some elections, they find voting inconvenient. They may be away or there may be something else that attracts them.

Q642 Tracey Crouch: For the elderly in particular, the postal voting system is incredibly useful.

Professor Banducci: Yes.

Q643 Tracey Crouch: But they are the ones who are more likely to have been voting throughout their entire lives.

Professor Banducci: So there is that age difference. There is also a resource gap.

Looking at reforms, actions or efforts that might be more geared toward engaging voters and making the election more meaningful and visible, such reforms have at least the potential to engage those citizens who have not been engaged in the process so far. Some of the evidence suggests that those sorts of reforms at least do not increase the inequality and they tend to increase turnout across the board, which I think is an outcome that we would value.

Q644 Tracey Crouch: What sort of reforms are you thinking of when you talk about making politics more meaningful?

Professor Banducci: That's a very good question. I think it is those aspects of reforms and efforts that can make the election and the issues in the campaign more visible to voters, so again they come to think that the election and the outcome are important. Some of the work that we have done recently has looked at the impact of the media on turnout. There are different ways in which we think the media and the visibility of the campaign in the media might influence turnout. It might inform voters, and if they are more informed, they are more likely to vote. It might influence their attitudes about different parties, which may influence turnout, or it might simply engage them more in the

political process. Our evidence here suggests that it is really about engagement; that information and visibility enhances people's sense of engagement in the campaign, and that motivates them to vote.

Q645 Tracey Crouch: That brings me very nicely on to Cristina. In your evidence, you state: "The public's perception of politics does obviously influence the extent to which they are inclined to participate through voting." What do you think are the main factors that shape the public's perception of politics?

Dr Leston-Bandeira: Before I answer that question, I just want to link to what has been previously said about inequalities. The impact is not just at the moment of voting; the impact is much further than that. The main gist of my evidence is that voter engagement needs to be seen in a much wider remit. Forty or 50 years ago, voting was the main moment—almost the only moment—for everyone to participate in politics. Today, we have a very different society where the information and flows of communication are very different, 24/7, and every day is a day of engagement between the four or five years. Those inequalities that we see in voter engagement are reproduced throughout the remainder of those days. So we see that those people who would not necessarily vote, which is almost like a minimum platform of belonging to a community, may not necessarily see any point in participating and engaging in political processes.

Q646 Tracey Crouch: So modern media has basically meant that we can, if we want to, engage with the voting public every day that we are elected, rather than just in the three weeks before a general election.

Dr Leston-Bandeira: So coming back to your question that links to that in terms of the influence of the media, there are obviously lots of factors, and many books have been written about that. There are all the traditional agents of civilisation that we would think about, such as parents, schools, friends and communities, but I think what is more important to think about today are networks of communities. Whereas our networks used to be bound by geography, our networks now are bound by communities and identities, so we link between those communities. Obviously, media has a huge impact and a huge influence on that, but if you think about who is exposed to the media, you are also talking about a limited public. If I think of my seven-year-old son and his friends, the main influences on their day-to-day life might be the Minecraft community, the gaming community—social communities that they have developed that go beyond the village where we live, beyond the UK, beyond Europe and across continents. It is more about communities. Obviously, how do you tap into those, because they are very different? It is not to say that the media does not have a role in them; obviously, it does have, just as politicians have in terms of what they portray and how they communicate.

Q647 Tracey Crouch: How effective do you think that the political institution—MPs, parties, Parliament, and so on—is in communicating with the public?

Dr Leston-Bandeira: In that way, you have a problem, which is the differentiation between Parliament and politicians, Parliament and MPs, Parliament and Government. The public does not necessarily differentiate all of those actors. So we have different actors with different communication strategies and different agendas, and the public does not necessarily differentiate those. Part of the role of Parliament may be to differentiate that role more clearly and say, "Parliament is there for the public and for the citizens. Government is there to govern and to execute policies." On how you communicate that, I think we have a lot of work to do, and it is obviously difficult in the context of the UK Parliament where you have 650 different MPs, all of them with different small businesses and

different agendas, not necessarily all talking in the same way and sometimes opposing each other. It is difficult to manage that, but not impossible. One thing we can learn from other Parliaments is that aggregation of some of those 650 individuals may introduce a level of common understanding, upon which it is easy to communicate with the public.

Q648 Tracey Crouch: Some of the gaps in knowledge that you mentioned, such as the difference between Parliament and Government, are quite basic. Do you think we should be improving our citizenship education in secondary school?

Dr Leston-Bandeira: Definitely. I would go lower, to be honest.

Q649 Tracey Crouch: Do you have any examples of best practice from other countries where they teach not politics per se, but an understanding of the political system?

Dr Leston-Bandeira: It is not my area of research, so I cannot give you examples, but I have had a lot of contact with France. There are lots of negative consequences of this, but the idea of being a republic and a nation, and civic duty, is much stronger. That is not to say that France does not have a lot of problems. These problems are not unique to the UK; they are problems you see elsewhere. I am not able to give you a specific example of where politics is effectively taught right from the start, but I believe strongly that it should be from a very young age.

Professor Stevens: I am aware of some things—not national programmes, but experiments that have been tried—that suggest it is quite tricky. Citizenship education is often thrown out there as something that would help, but I'm not sure that the evidence is there. I was in America for a long time, and what was tried locally in Minnesota, where I was, is an approach where you try to get students to understand the process of politics by getting them involved in a community project. It taught them about some of the difficulties that are involved in politics—making decisions and that kind of thing—so it was beneficial. However, one of the things we measure in our surveys is political efficacy—“Can I make a difference?”—and as a result of that experiment, the students felt they had less influence on the political process than they did to begin with. My point is that these things can be appealing and they may make a difference, but they can also backfire.

Q650 Tracey Crouch: Yes, so in an attempt to engage people by improving their understanding of the process, it ends up disengaging them further.

Professor Stevens: It can do.

Q651 Tracey Crouch: Sorry, I jumped away from the media for a second there. Would you say that the traditional media's coverage of politics and elections has an adverse impact on voter engagement? We have taken evidence from broadcasters, for example, as part of this inquiry. Obviously, they have specific functions—particularly the BBC, with its charter. I wonder whether you think the traditional media—not the new media or social media—can deter people from getting involved in the political process.

Professor Stevens: I don't see a simple relationship. Of course, they can have an adverse impact. Are they part of the explanation for declining turnout in general elections? It is not clear to me that media coverage is, although there are characteristics of which we can be critical. I'm not sure they

account for perceptions of politics, and so on. I would also add that the survey evidence on interest in politics has not changed; people are as interested as they ever were.

Getting back to the media, there are various distinctions to be made. Are the traditional media providing information about politics, elections and so on? They still are; certainly, television is to a great extent. So there is that side of it. They could always provide more, but would people watch it? I don't know. There is the tone of coverage. Are they cynical towards politics and politicians, and is that problematic? Certainly, from the analysis we do, the tone of the coverage of politics and politicians—particularly in the partisan press, but to an extent on TV, too—is quite negative. Interviewing styles here are quite aggressive, as you know.

Q652 Tracey Crouch: But that has always been the case. The fact is that politicians have pretty much always been loathed by the public, and the press have always written negative stories. If you go back to looking at the *London Gazette* back in 1800 something or other, there will be a scathing attack on the Prime Minister at the time.

Professor Stevens: That suggests it's not the modern media practice, although I would say it has not always been the case. Look at interviews, say, in the '50s and '60s; the way that politicians were interviewed on TV—the sort of questions they were asked—is not the same.

Q653 Tracey Crouch: So there was a bit more respect shown, perhaps?

Professor Stevens: Yes, but when you look at transcripts or something like that, I do not think that those sorts of changes in deference are unique to the relationship between media and politicians; they are there for academics and students, and teachers and pupils. It is all over society.

Q654 Tracey Crouch: Christina, in your evidence you write about modern media. You say that one of your research interests is the impact of the internet on Parliament. Do you think that Parliament's use of the internet has improved the public's perception of it?

Dr Leston-Bandeira: Before I answer that question, may I just add a point to the last one? Looking at traditional media and trying to separate that from new media is very difficult. New media amplifies the stronger messages of traditional media. That is one of the explanations for the much more aggressive or adversarial type of messages being transmitted, and it is much quicker and all of that.

On the impact of the internet on Parliament and whether it has improved perceptions of Parliament, the short answer is no, it hasn't, but the more interesting question is how it can. It is not about whether it has had an impact. Data is just there—it is pervasive and embedded more and more in our daily lives. It is a new means of communication and has had a huge impact on Parliament. That is not to say that it is about improving perceptions.

The main impact the internet has had on Parliament is to increase its visibility. If you go back 30 years and look at any parliamentary institution anywhere in the world, very few people could access that institution. Today, with a few clicks, I can go and find out something about the Botswana Parliament—I don't know anything about it. It is that visibility that has had an impact on Parliament by, ironically, making it more vulnerable and open in terms of people being able to see and assess for themselves what is happening in the institution. Parliaments—not just in the UK, but elsewhere—are still adapting and adjusting to that new way of communication and openness to the public.

A lot of our parliamentary processes—I'm not just talking about the UK, but in the literature—are very much developed in the climate and expectation of the representative, say, 19th or early 20th-century democracy. In the context of the 21st century, that has many challenges because people want to have a say. They want to say, "I know about that." I often use this example with my students: one of my sons has dyslexia, and if there is talk in Parliament about dyslexia, I feel that I have a very strong voice because I know about it. I may know more about it than the MPs discussing it, although they may have had information about it and they are the legitimate people to make the decisions, but, as a citizen, I have a view. Having a view and the increased visibility has had an impact by making Parliament much more easily susceptible to criticism.

At the moment, we are at a time of change, when many Parliaments are adapting and realising that a traditional, institutional style of communication does not necessarily fit the 21st-century style of communication, with the general framework we have been talking about this morning. Parliaments are trying to see how best to do that. We are still at the early stages of understanding how to make the transition to keep the strong parameters of representative democracy because that is the only way we can bring 40 million or 200 million people together in a coherent government, but at the same time having paths of openness of communication and input from citizens.

Q655 Tracey Crouch: So that is the Parliament, going back to the conversation we had earlier about having an understanding of differences between Parliament, parties, Government, MPs. What about MPs and the use of social media? Do you think that is going to help to increase voter engagement? Or is just going to mean that people have views about individual MPs and that it is not going to make any difference?

Dr Leston-Bandeira: Again, social media is there and we cannot turn away from it. It is how it is done. Some MPs are very good in engaging with social media; other MPs use it as an annunciator, just announcing activities, rather than engaging in conversation. We also have to be very aware of what resources this carries with it. If you raise expectations that people can enter into a dialogue through social media with their MP, that is fine, but we also need to understand what that means in terms of the resources of the people and systems supporting that MP. Maybe something that we need to do better is about supporting MPs to understand better how to listen to their constituents through those means, how to filter through that listening and how to be able to respond in a more effective way.

Q656 Tracey Crouch: Thank you. Susan, do you have anything to add?

Professor Banducci: My thoughts on social media and the use of social media by MPs come from some data collected by a research student recently. That research shows that MPs are keen to use social media and do engage in it, but do not really see it as an effective means of engaging and mobilising new party members, for example, and then having those new party members go out and mobilise voters. As Cristina says, it is a new tool that one would need to use because if you are not on Twitter or Facebook then you are not engaged or aware of the current situation. Whether it is effective in engaging new party members or activists, or in mobilising citizens, there is still evidence and data to be collected.

Q657 Chris Ruane: I think Cristina used the phrase "civic duty". Are you aware that with the new registration that has been proposed that the Government at one time were proposing a tick box to opt out, that it was a kind of lifestyle choice to get involved in the democratic process instead of a civic duty? Mercifully, they dropped that. How can we promote this civic duty to parents? Should we

be saying to parents, “Take your infants and children down with you when you vote on polling day.”? What more could be done to promote getting involved in voting and the democratic process as a civic duty?

Dr Leston-Bandeira: I think involving parents is definitely a good way of doing it. It is through education, schools. As I said earlier, from a very early age, it is not necessarily linked to learning about politics and institutions; it is about being part of a society. If you are part of a society you, if you take part in that society and community, to be part of that community, you do lots of things. You don’t go and steal. You don’t do a number of things such as destroy property. There are many things we do as part of society and the community, and one of them is to vote. One of them is to say, “I think in this way. I contribute in this way.” Schools can have an important role in reinforcing that message.

Q658 Chris Ruane: Do you think school councils are a good thing? He said, expecting the answer yes.

Dr Leston-Bandeira: Yes, absolutely. Any experiments, any situations where children, pupils, students from key stage 1 to sixth form, where they are involved in a situation where they have to participate in a decision and vote, is all good practice. Coming back to your point at the beginning, one very simple solution that I feel strongly about because I am a bit of a continental person, although I know it is polemical and a lot of people do not agree, is that to have the voting day on a Sunday would make a big difference. It is something special to do and should be on a special day—a day that is mainly dedicated to one activity for the whole country that is voting. It should not be something to fit in around school runs and work and all of that. It is little things like that that make it something special and something for the whole community. It is about belonging to a group and a society.

Q659 Chris Ruane: The Welsh Assembly paid for schools to go down from north Wales to Cardiff. They actually paid for the children to come down to Parliament. There is a similar scheme here in our Parliament, but I think it is only a fraction of the cost. Do you think more resources should be made available to schools to actually bring their pupils down to the mother of Parliaments to engage with their MP and the institution?

Dr Leston-Bandeira: Definitely. You are asking the person who is completely converted to all those things. I am a school governor and I have been trying to bring the school here. As a lecturer believing very strongly in education, we should definitely do those things.

One thing I would point out though is that sometimes the most expensive options are not necessarily the only options. For instance, I live in the north of England. We could have experiments; we could have ballot boxes up there; and we could do all sorts of role simulations without having to come down here. I think coming down here is important, but obviously, realistically, that has lots of costs and difficulties, but it does need to be supported. There are other things we can do to reinforce the act of voting and of going to a ballot box and putting your vote in there.

Q660 Chris Ruane: Again, you have come up with some great ideas as Rebecca did before. Should we have a kind of blueprint of good democratic involvement for pupils? There is best practice in Northern Ireland, around the country and around the world, and if we should have a blueprint,

whose job would it be to bring them together, and say, “We’ve scanned the world and these are the best ideas to engage young people and young minds.”?”

Dr Leston-Bandeira: It comes back to the point about who is responsible: Government, Parliament, parties. I agree with Susan and with Rebecca earlier that it is about a whole society approach. The Electoral Commission obviously plays an important role in all sorts of areas to support what we know about elections and provide information. There are also a variety of organisations out there that are already doing that job and disseminating what it means to vote. Maybe what we could do is support more of those organisations, so that they spread the word across the country. Maybe we should think more of a bottom-up approach rather than a top-down approach in terms of having one institution that does that and decides what is good practice. Different people have different ideas, but definitely having a sort of blueprint or a few ideas that people could experiment with would, I am sure, help a lot of schools. Quite often, they just don’t know how to address these issues.

Q661 Chris Ruane: Do you think that the Churches could play a bigger role in the UK? If you look at the Churches and their role in America in the 1950s and ’60s or even today, they play a fantastic role in engaging marginalised communities. If we are on about individual campaigns, do you think charities should play a bigger role in engaging young people? If so, what do you think about the Government’s proposals to say to charities, “If you get involved in the party political process, we’ll stop your funding or you will lose your charitable status.”?”

Dr Leston-Bandeira: One of the main difficulties we have had is participating in politics in terms of big “P” politics and formal, traditional political institutions. We need to move away from that perspective because it is happening already. We have communities, charities and organisations all across the country promoting engagement one way or another. Sometimes, it is engagement in an issue—diabetes or nursing or whatever it is—that may not seem political, but it is about politics because it is about society.

Q662 Chris Ruane: Everything is about politics.

Dr Leston-Bandeira: Everything is about politics. That is what we need to reinforce. All of those organisations already working in the community are what we should reinforce, not expect that everything comes from more formal institutions. It is more effective because a lot of people will not listen to formal institutions.

Q663 Chris Ruane: Okay. Your written evidence states that the general political interest and engagement might not necessarily translate into voting. How can we ensure that there is a greater connection between political interest and participating at elections?

Dr Leston-Bandeira: Well, in part, I think I have said a little bit about that and making the link between the two of them more explicit. The very strong focus on voter turnout is obviously understandable; it is a very clear indicator and a very worrying indicator. I think there is sometimes a tendency to just focus on that and forget that it is linked to other engagements. Making that link more explicit is one way of trying to gauge that general engagement and leading people to vote. It is also about showing that politics is not just about party politics or big “P” politics, but about everything happening in society.

Q664 Chris Ruane: I have one more question. You also identify some things that have been done to engage the public better with politics, such as the use of social media by Select Committees. Which changes do you think have been the most effective? How can this work be advanced in the future?

Dr Leston-Bandeira: That focuses specifically on Parliament and public engagement.

Chris Ruane: And the work that Select Committees do.

Dr Leston-Bandeira: Yes. The sort of experiments that I think have worked the best are those that are more personal and more human rather than formal, and more issue-specific.

A recent example is Parliament's experiments with hashtags—#askgove or #askpickles—to bring in questions from the public. That makes it more specific to one issue. It brings in people who may have an interest in that area.

There have also been experiments such as an inquiry into domestic violence; questioning about that in Mumsnet, rather than necessarily on the Parliament website. Those sorts of experiments are all about something that is linked to issues that links into existing communities, which are already out there discussing such issues, rather than formal politics. All those things can only do good in terms of engaging people into politics.

Q665 Chris Ruane: So not so much hierarchical as lo-erarchical.

Dr Leston-Bandeira: Definitely.

Q666 Chris Ruane: Do you think that MPs need more training in social media? Parliament could put training on here for us. Perhaps one of our trainers could be Tracey Crouch—

Tracey Crouch: tracey_crouch.

Chris Ruane: She got praises from 38 Degrees for her work. Should we be sharing best practice among ourselves? If so, who could be the trainers? Who are the best people out there to come to Parliament to say, "This is how you do it."?

Dr Leston-Bandeira: Oh goodness. There are so many people out there.

Chris Ruane: Or in here.

Dr Leston-Bandeira: Indeed. I'd agree. Tracey Crouch is a very good example; I follow you. It is a very good example of little things. It just shows that she is—sorry for saying this—a human being, not an MP. Small activities, engaging, giving response; that sort of thing.

Training, definitely. Obviously, social media is very new. My sons know far more about it than I do. I learn every day with them. It is changing so quickly that training would be useful. There are plenty of institutions out there that focus on that sort of issue. But also, within MPs themselves, there are plenty of evaluators saying, "Who are the best MPs doing this and that?" There is plenty of information there.

One thing I would say is that that training is not just about how you use it. A lot of it is just about communication. If you are a good communicator, you will communicate well on social media, as soon as you know one or two things.

One thing that is important in there that I think is missing at the moment is how to do the listening to the citizens and filtering that information, so that you can do a good job as an MP. For that, there are a number of tools and resources that MPs could do with having that would make their work more effective.

Q667 Chris Ruane: Now to Professors Susan Banducci and Daniel Stevens. One of the recommendations you make in your written submission is to implement a social media campaign encouraging people to vote. Who should lead this campaign, and how could it be most effective?

Professor Banducci: Following on from what was just said, the idea with a social media campaign, which is related to the social organisations that you mentioned, in terms of their impact on voting, is this idea that voting is a social act and that a social media campaign should play on those aspects of social pressure. We know that people vote when they are asked to vote, when their peers discuss with them voting and when their social groups also vote. So this social media campaign is another way of achieving that goal.

Who should manage such a social media campaign? It could come from non-partisan groups or political parties. My view is, and the evidence that we have gathered suggests, that political parties are quite effective at mobilising citizens. They are quite effective at delivering the message that their vote makes a difference. So, supporting political parties, candidates and their efforts at social media campaigns, as Christine suggested, is one way of achieving that.

Professor Stevens: Just echoing the non-partisan point, I am not sure who should lead. I hate to bring up the idea of celebrities, but some campaigns have been quite effective, such as Rock the Vote in the US, which is quite old now. It would not necessarily have to be social media, but people like Madonna saying—I am showing my age—“You should exercise your right to vote.” There are all kinds of other people, too.

Q668 Chris Ruane: At the other end, you have Russell Brand, with 7 million followers, saying to people, “Don’t register. Don’t vote. Don’t get involved.” He’s a powerful personality—a powerful person—spreading this message not to get involved. Do you have any ideas who could be a counter to Russell Brand? I am too old to suggest anyone.

Professor Stevens: You need the anti-Russell Brand. I don’t know who that might be.

Q669 Tracey Crouch: Does it have to be a person, or can it be an institution? I am obsessed—the Committee thinks I am obsessed—with Denmark’s Voteman video that they put out for the European Parliament elections. It was a cartoon designed to basically encourage youngsters to vote. It had to be banned because of the content, but it was an experiment in trying to make sure that youngsters understood the value of voting. So does it have to be an individual? Can it be an institution such as the Electoral Commission, the Government or Parliament?

Dr Leston-Bandeira: Can I back up what was said before? It comes back to the fact that we are not young people as such, and so we do not necessarily know who those people are. We know who Madonna is, but there are plenty of teenagers out there who in digital marketing are called super-

influencers. Those people are being followed by lots and lots of young people. We do not necessarily know who they are. People in digital marketing do. People who monitor what is happening digitally know who these people are. Perhaps you could have someone like that transmitting your own message. One good example of what Parliament has done recently is a TEDx initiative. They have had people like Jamal Edwards, who is a YouTuber and very well known across the community of YouTubers. I had no idea who he was. I know now. I bet my sons would know who he is. If they had someone who they follow—Hat Films does lots of Minecrafting—they would listen to what that person says. So I think individual people have a much more powerful effect than the selling institution does.

Q670 David Morris: It has just occurred to me—obviously, we are trying to get a message across for people of all age groups, not just young people, to vote—the amount of times that I have knocked on the door in my political career and people have said, “Is there an election on?” They don’t really know what’s going on out there, for whatever reason. A lot of young people use the internet. I don’t think I’d like to get myself into this one, but I look into Google. I am just using Google as an example, as a search engine. They are very good at changing their moniker—their title—every other day. Would it not be an idea to put an apolitical statement underneath: “Have you voted today?” Something like that might awaken interest: “It’s an election day. Have you voted?”

Dr Leston-Bandeira: In the last European elections, I believe Google did do that in the UK—and in the Netherlands, I think. That is exactly the sort of thing we need. The thing to always remember is that there is no magic wand. It is about a number of different approaches.

Q671 Chris Ruane: My final question is to Professor Daniel Stevens. You have a particular interest in political behaviour in the US and Britain. Are there any key lessons or warnings that we should take from the US approach to voter engagement?

Professor Stevens: It goes back to one of the earlier questions. In the case of the US, the main message is that there was a lot of focus on reforms back in the ‘80s and ‘90s, which Susan mentioned earlier. It was all about, “If we make voting easier for people, that will solve the problem.” In America, there was quite an onerous registration process in a lot of states. Where registration was made easier with “motor voter” legislation it was thought that that would mean turnout going up dramatically, and inequality would be reduced. Neither of those things happened, and so they moved on to this second part of the voting process. Just making it easier is not sufficient, although it helps at the margins. You have got to both do that and mobilise people. Turnout has increased in America partly because of context—the nature of elections and competitiveness—but also because social media has been used very effectively. Obama has obviously done so in elections. They have gone back to quite traditional forms of mobilisation.

Q672 Chris Ruane: What is your assessment of voter suppression in America? For example, what about the requirement that people must have photo ID when they go to polling stations? It has been adopted only in Republican states, but is now being proposed by the Electoral Commission for the UK. Mercifully, the three political parties have said they are not interested in it, but what is your impression of voter suppression in the UK and the use of photo ID as proposed by the Electoral Commission?

Professor Stevens: Anything that makes the voting process—despite what I have said about making it more convenient not increasing turnout—seem more onerous is not a good idea. What is going on in America is also not a good idea and seems to be driven by partisan considerations.

Q673 Chris Ruane: In America?

Professor Stevens: Yes.

Chris Ruane: But it is being proposed by the independent Electoral Commission here.

Professor Stevens: Here it is not partisan, but I still don't think it is a good idea to make voting seem more onerous.

Q674 Chris Ruane: Why not?

Professor Stevens: Because you are likely to decrease turnout and particularly likely to discourage the people who are on the cusp of not voting in the first place.

Q675 Chris Ruane: Are they of any socio-economic profile?

Professor Stevens: We think they tend to be the poorer, less engaged and less networked.

Q676 Chris Ruane: So you think that if a photo ID requirement was introduced in the UK mainland it would have a detrimental effect on that voter profile?

Professor Stevens: It is not going to increase turnout and it is pretty likely to decrease it.

Chris Ruane: Okay.

Professor Banducci: I would like to follow up on a point that Dan made about social media. It is great, but we should not lose focus on more traditional ways of mobilisation. The social media campaign was effective in increasing turnout because it was linked to a particular candidate and party, which then mobilised voters. I think those sorts of efforts using social media can be effective if they come from parties who can deliver that message. Celebrity efforts can also be effective. For the youth particularly, Harry Styles and One Direction would be the perfect group and celebrity to deliver that message to youth voters.

Q677 Chris Ruane: Whose job should it be to co-ordinate that?

When I put parliamentary questions about this issue to the Electoral Commission they were very wary of it. They said, "Oh no, this celebrity might be seen to be a Labour celebrity or a Conservative celebrity."

Professor Banducci: I see no issues. In the US, as the situation has become more polarised, celebrities are aligning themselves with parties. I do not see an issue with that. I think Russell Brand and his anti-voting campaign was effectively countered in the media by those who came out and said, "No, Russell Brand is wrong. There are reasons to vote. We should all be voting." I think there was quite an effective campaign that countered that argument.

Q678 Chris Ruane: Who organised that campaign, or did it just appear?

Professor Banducci: I don't know. I can't remember who it came from on the left, but it was an effective campaign that countered that; it was covered in *The Guardian*.

Q679 Mr Chope: Just listening to one of your comments about schools councils, in the time between when I was at school and now, there has been a proliferation of schools councils and it seems to have coincided with a reduced interest among young people and in voter engagement. Do you think the advent of schools councils has brought down the age at which cynicism about politics and people elected to positions begins?

Dr Leston-Bandeira: No, I don't think so, although I do think there is something else underneath that question: we are much more critical today than we were 40 or 50 years ago. Whether you are a young person or not so young, you have access to information and you have your own views in a way that you would not have had 50 years ago, so we all have more views on what is going on. That is one of the contributors to that increased cynicism. We think, "Well, I know better. I know this. I can bring a different point of view."

The other thing is that school councils or any Parliaments are about conflict, aren't they? They are about co-ordinating that conflict and different points of view and coming up with a decision. There is an argument that that can teach young people how to learn about that process. But there is also the argument that the more visible you make that, the more people will disengage, thinking, "Well, it is just about people having a fight and not actually coming to any output."

The other thing about the school councils is the idea I was referring to before which is about linking more specifically the public engagement with a voting engagement, to make more of the link between the two types of activity. You may have people who want to engage on local issues or matters that concern them, such as health issues, but who have not realised that this is about participating in formal politics such as through voting.

Q680 Mr Chope: Nobody has said much about the quality of voter engagement. How much premium do you put on the quality? Obviously what we want to have is people engaged in the political process who have critical faculties, who ask questions and assess the answers that they are getting, rather than people who are blindly following the equivalent of a football team because they have grown up singing that anthem and supporting those colours.

Dr Leston-Bandeira: Recently, there have been quite a few initiatives trying to improve exactly that. There are quite a few people who think that one of the issues is that we don't have enough good quality information about the different debates. In the last few elections we have seen a proliferation of something called voting advice applications—websites where different points of view from the different candidates are put through. The idea is to inform the public about those different issues. Those things work well, but very much for the public who are already engaged. If you are looking for information you already want to do that. So it is about also showing that voting—that critical vote every four or five years—is not just about choosing specific candidates, but about being part of the community, being part of everything you have been doing before, about engagement, transmitted into one formal moment where you put your vote in the ballot box.

Q681 Mr Turner: Can you follow it up a bit more? Either it is the Government who organise something or local government. Or it is the private sector, which, as far as I can see, is perfectly all

right, or it is public money, but not somehow the Government or local government. Are you proposing all of those three or none of those three to help encourage others to go and vote?

Dr Leston-Bandeira: I think it is all of those three that need to be involved, but probably with different purposes and different types of activities. So the society and community organisations exist already and they want to play that role—

Q682 Mr Turner: Sorry, what kind of—

Dr Leston-Bandeira: What kind of organisations? I am thinking of the Democratic Society—it is an organisation that works in that area—and Bite the Ballot. There is a wide range of organisations doing that job already. That does not mean that Government shouldn't do it. Obviously the Government also needs to do it but probably from a different point of view, the point of view of supporting the general infrastructure of voting and providing information and perhaps also being more aware that it cannot just be a top-down approach. There also needs to be a bottom-up approach. There will be other actors in there, other institutions and other organisations who will want to give information about what is going on.

Q683 Mr Turner: Okay, but perhaps I misheard what Professor Banducci said. I got the impression that your view was that it does not matter who encourages people to vote, so long as they or we welcome those things. Do you mean “we” as part of the Government or “we” as part of Parliament? Or do you just mean more broadly people who have some money and wish to spend it in this way?

Professor Banducci: I think an effective way of investing resources is to support political parties and candidates in mobilising voters. The Electoral Commission also plays an important role in mobilising voters. The discussions about encouraging civic duty through school programmes is potentially effective. Civic duty is an attitude or sentiment long in development, and it is very difficult to put a finger on what sorts of things enhance it. It is likely to be something cultural. If we look comparatively, there are some countries in which the sense of civic duty is high and some in which it is low. I am most concerned about what goes on during the election campaign that can bring voters into the electorate and allow them to express their preferences. That expression of preferences will do a good job of enhancing a commitment to further engagement, if they have not been engaged before. I fear I am a bit traditional in thinking that parties and candidates play an important role in delivering that message to voters.

Q684 Mr Turner: But the problem is that there are lots of Conservatives and lots of Labour party Members here; a few Liberals, going down; and no UKIP. How do you decide which of these are relevant and which aren't?

Professor Banducci: That's a very good question: which parties and which sources should get funding? There are some rules already about what sorts of parties get direct funding.

Q685 Mr Turner: Yes, but are they up to date?

Professor Banducci: That, I think, bears further investigation. We need further investigation into the impact of directing resources and directly funding parties for certain types of activities. The current direct funding goes to certain activities, so what potential is there outside that?

Granted, there is the point you made, which is that the number of people who align themselves with political parties is declining. Still, in an electoral environment, voters have options among those candidates and parties. We should focus on candidates and give them resources, which is something that is not currently done. Those resources can then be spent in constituencies where there is greater local effort on mobilising voters. That is something that potentially could be explored.

Q686 Mr Turner: I am perfectly happy to encourage people to vote. I do that quite a lot, and fortunately they vote Conservative—mostly. I am perfectly happy with that in marginal wards. I don't understand what you are proposing. That is the problem. I understand the principle, but I don't understand the detail. You've got to sort out the detail.

Dr Leston-Bandeira: I am afraid that I can't do that for you now. Parties and candidates have scarce resources, and we know that resources go to marginal districts, because that is where parties stand to gain the most from any investment. Every further investment they make in a marginal district is likely to get them a bigger return, in terms of winning that district. There is no point in investing in districts where they are quite safe or whether they have no hope. It is in districts where no effort is made that turnout tends to be lower. If there is a mechanism that allows candidates and parties to more fairly distribute resources across constituencies, rather than focus on marginal districts, that may increase turnout across the board.

Q687 Mr Turner: If you could send some information about that, I would be very grateful.

My second question is about the 3 million overseas voters who are not registered or do not find it easy to vote. It is much more difficult if you live in the north of Spain than if you live in the UK.

Professor Stevens: Why?

Q688 Mr Turner: Why? Because it takes a long time to send a postal vote to people, and they have to send it back. What are you doing about that?

Professor Stevens: The problem with overseas voters, from the point of view of what we have been describing, is that they are an example of where you can make the process of voting seemingly quite easy, because you send them an absentee ballot, but motivation to vote may not be there.

Q689 Mr Turner: Oh, no, it is not the motivation, but that it takes too much time to get it out, fill it in and get it back by post.

Professor Stevens: You could make it easier by allowing them to vote electronically and so on, but I am not sure whether that would make a huge difference.

Q690 Mr Turner: It could make 3 million votes of difference.

Professor Stevens: If they all voted, yes.

Professor Banducci: I think the point there about making overseas voting more convenient is different from the convenience argument we made in terms of citizens living within the country. I am an overseas voter from the US, and you are right that overseas voting is sometimes quite onerous because I have to fill in my ballot and ensure that it is posted. And, in terms of local elections, I miss out on all the intensity of the campaign were I resident there. But last time, I was allowed to vote electronically, which made it much easier for me to do so.

Chair: Thank you very much Susan, Daniel, Christina. That was very informative. We will continue our work. We hope that, once we have received further evidence from people, we will pull together a report and that, as we move into a general election, that will help all parties to improve voter engagement. Of course, we hope that whoever wins that election will press those recommendations that might require a change in the law, so that we can get more and more people involved in our democracy. Thank you so much for your time this morning. Colleagues, thank you for your time this morning.