

Written evidence submitted by Mrs Stella Davis [MEL 169]

Democratic Engagement

I am now retired but worked in local government for many years, with qualifications in Public Administration. I am active in local political matters,

I am very concerned about the current system of first past the post elections. The complex political and environmental scene which exists now requires stability, long term planning and cooperative working to create a society that is sustainable. The constant change in political leadership over the past few years has been really damaging to people's sense of power and choice. For example in my local constituency of Bury St Edmunds and Stowmarket, at the last election the Labour candidate won with nearly 33% of the votes cast. Therefore 67% of the voters wanted someone else as their MP. Their opinions were lost to the government of the day. The Labour majority was just over 1450. By this token, these people could have stayed at home and not voted and the result would have been the same. I think there would be more involvement if people felt that their vote really affected the outcome.

I also see the influence of far-right groups and first past the post allows for temporary popularity to gain a foothold, without the steadying influence of more moderate points of view.

I have long wanted to see a system of proportional representation in place. It has always felt fairer but in the current climate I think it is essential.

I am concerned about lowering the voting age because I think schools are under a great deal of pressure already to cover the curriculum and good political debate could easily give way to peer pressure. However, I also know that there is a minority of 16-18 year olds who are tax payers and should have representation. I also think that the Brexit vote showed a different voting profile amongst younger voters and they should be allowed to have a say in their future.

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