Chair's Report to the AGM

2026 is proving to be a watershed year in the fight for Fair Votes. LDER has recognised this and seized the moment.

Let's Fix Politics

LDER's voter-facing, emotive campaign was pre-launched at Spring Conference and took to the streets in early June. Let's Fix Politics empathises with the massive and dangerous disillusion, distrust and despair with politics so many voters feel; it links the way we have to vote to the way politics fails to deal with everyday concerns; and it puts electoral reform firmly on the agenda for positive change. Let's Fix Politics to Fix the Country's Problems.

Our survey question: 'Is politics working for you? has drawn thousands of responses, the vast majority calling for change.

It gives the Liberal Democrats a flag to rally behind. What do the Liberal Democrats Stand For? We stand for fixing our politics so we can fix the country's problems.

A longstanding, deeply-held belief - the reason many members joined the party in the first place - comes out of the shadows of technical policy to come alive for real people on the streets and on the social media platforms. Our MPs have been resolute in making the case in Parliament; we now have the grassroots campaign to complement and broaden that case.

Operationally, LDER, for the first time, took on paid staffing expertise. This was crucial to making Let's Fix Politics work. It has over-stretched us financially and indeed every which way but has enabled us to have an impact that has exceeded all our expectations. So far:

- **20+** local parties across the country have already taken part - just the start
- **3500+** people from of every age, party and corner of the UK have filled in the survey
- **2700+ (79%!)** signed the petition - all of that comes with postcodes & voter intent data
- **37%** agreed to receive emails from LDER - including hundreds of Green & Labour supporters: This campaign helps with the squeeze.
- **20%** even agreed to hear directly from local parties (you!) about your local campaigns.

We've had endorsement and support from party leaders:
'... the appetite for fixing our politics has never been greater. And I want a big shout out for LDER. What a great campaign they are running on fixing our politics. That has made an impact on me and I want us to be the party people look to for that radical change..'
Ed Davey, Conference q&a September 20th.

Expectations exceeded, we have committed to campaigning until at least next March (original plan was to conclude at the September Autumn Conference). This is wildly over-stretching us, so help us if you can - by volunteering and donating. Now is the time.

In Parliament

Throughout the year, LDER supported the great work of our MPs. We are in the secretariat of the All Party Parliament Group (APPG) for Fair Elections, with the brilliant Lisa Smart MP (our Cabinet Office front bench spokesperson) as its Vice Chair. We work collaboratively cross-party, notably with Labour reformers such as Labour for a New Democracy and Labour Campaign for Electoral Reform. A great APPG achievement this year has been September's announcement of a National Commission on Electoral Reform by Prime Minister Burnham - the concept and design for a Commission originated within the APPG.

Our MPs have done great work and we have supported them every step of the way. The Representation of the People bill went through the Commons and by November had reached Committee Stage in the Lords, where Lord Mark Pack (also a Strategy Adviser to LDER) leads for us, as does Lisa in the Commons. We briefed and fed draft questions to the Select Committee reviewing the bill.

Sarah Olney MP followed her coup of a winning vote in her Ten Minute Rule bill (December 2024) with a rousing Westminster Hall debate on a very hot July day. Our MPs rallied to the cause and importantly, Sarah's initiative gave several Labour MPs a 'safe space' to speak in favour of Fair Votes. We posted videos from that debate widely on social media - a key contemporary way of getting a multiplier effect off our MPs work.

Throughout, Ed Davey has articulated the case for electoral reform and for fixing our politics. We appreciate the active collaboration of Ed and his team.

And Olly Glover MP is a superbly pro-active President of LDER. A lot of his impact is 'behind the scenes', informing and briefing our Parliamentary party; he has also unstintingly been available for fund-raising events, chairing meetings and generally being there at all important times. I am delighted that he has agreed to soldier on as President next year and I look forward to confirming that at the AGM.

The Democracy Sector

A crucial role is to work with our 'non-party/all-party allies'. A great deal of time and effort goes into this. Compass and Make Votes Matter have joined Conference fringe meeting panels this year. Unlock Democracy and the Electoral Reform Society have co-hosted fringe meetings. All have supported Let's Fix Politics by alerting their known Liberal Democrat members to our Action Days and zoom Briefings. We couldn't do all this without their active (and, yes, better-resourced!) capacity and we look forward to more and even closer collaboration in 2027 and beyond.

Structure and governance

The increase of annual LDER subs to £20 at last year's AGM has been generally well-accepted by our members and we are grateful to everyone who has had to dig a bit deeper into their pockets as a result. Our fees are still below the average for the party's affiliate organisations (AOs); and we are recommending a freeze for 2027.

In September, HQ announced a review of the performance of all AOs and at an ever-so-slightly heated meeting of AOs at September Conference, we made the case once again that ever since the adoption of the Fleet system in 2023, AOs have been excluded from real-time access to Lighthouse and Connect. This effectively puts barriers in the way of our reaching out to our party membership and recruiting new members; and alerting local parties to new activists. Our take is that HQ simply doesn't recognise or give any priority to AOs. Maybe they're right to do so - but when we are badly-stretched anyway, the extra admin and frustrations is something we could do without.

Looking ahead

2027 looks fraught with possibility and pitfalls. With Andy Burnham as Prime Minister there is a commitment to a National Commission on Electoral Reform and hope always springs anew. We are urging a fast start to the Commission - at the right time and in the right place we will advocate STV. Mr Burnham says he wants a commitment to PR in Labour's next election manifesto - but that of course means 2029 (or whenever) will be held under the dangerously destructive and vote-distorting First Past the Post.

We shall continue the fight for Fair Votes NOW. Let's see what the coming year brings.

Finally: thanks and -

This past breathless year and what we've achieved has only been possible due to the efforts of more people than I can manage to acknowledge (and I'd only miss important contributors out) so thanks go to all our volunteer activists up and down the country, to our donors who continue to make Let's Fix Politics possible; and to the members and supporters of LDER including of course the officers and the executive. It's a big motivation to have such levels of support from so many of us.

And while we are small and our resources are painfully limited, this is not a small thing we're doing. Not some tweak in pursuit of arithmetical fairness. It's about the way power works and is shared across modern societies. Democracy today is under threat, not just in other places but here too, in a way I never thought I'd see in my lifetime. What we are doing is renewing our democratic systems and institutions, revitalising trust among people that democratic politics works best and can deliver. This has to be worth the effort, the fight.

At the top of my To-Do list I keep this quote:

'You're not allowed to give up' Alexei Navalny.

Is it too high-falutin’ to compare ourselves to him? Maybe, but if so, let’s just draw inspiration for resilience and for the campaign. It is one deeply worth winning.

Keith Sharp
November 7, 2026