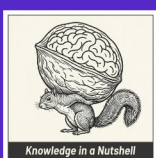


NATIONAL COMMISSION ON ELECTORAL REFORM

IN A NUTSHELL



ABOUT THIS SERIES

NUTSHELL GUIDES

Nutshell Guides is an Open Britain series. Each edition takes an important question in British democracy and explains it clearly - the background, the arguments, the proposals, and where things stand.

We write for people who want to understand, not just be told what to think. Each guide distils specialist material - parliamentary proposals, policy documents, research - into something you can read in a single sitting.

This is the **NCER** guide. It covers the proposal for a National Commission on Electoral Reform: what it is, why it matters, how it would work, and why the decision on it is live now.

Future editions will cover other questions in British democracy. If you found this useful, pass it on.

Open Britain campaigns for a fairer democracy - for a voting system that reflects how people actually vote, against foreign interference in British politics, and for a political system that ordinary people can trust.

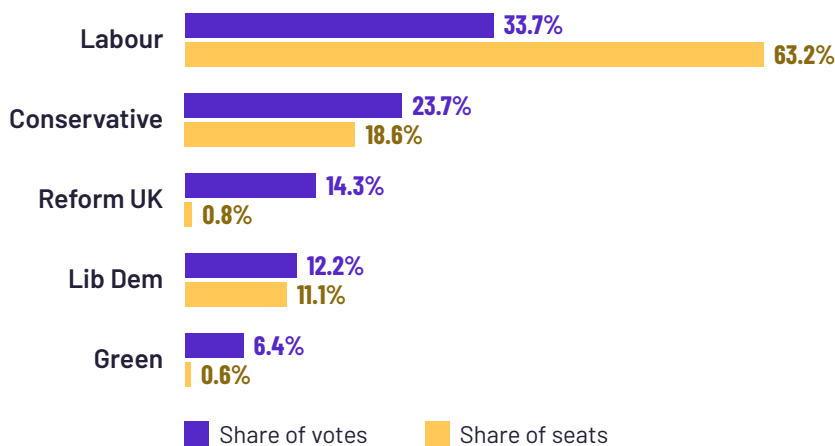
www.open-britain.co.uk

A SYSTEM OUT OF STEP

Britain's voting system was built for a two-party world. We no longer live in one.

In 2024, Labour won one of the largest parliamentary majorities in modern history – on one third of the vote. Their 33.7% vote share produced 411 seats: nearly two thirds of the House of Commons. Under a system that converted votes to seats fairly, one third of the votes would produce roughly one third of the seats. It produced nearly two thirds.

That gap – between the votes people cast and the power those votes generate – is not a quirk or an accident. It is how First Past the Post works. The Electoral Reform Society called the 2024 result "not only the most disproportional election in British electoral history, but one of the most disproportional seen anywhere in the world."



Votes in, seats out. General election 2024, Great Britain. Source: House of Commons Library, CBP-10009.

33.7%

Labour's share of the vote in 2024. It produced 63% of the seats.

IN PLAIN ENGLISH

First Past the Post

One MP per constituency. The candidate with the most votes wins, even if most people voted for someone else.

The 2024 result was not a one-off. It was the latest point in a long trend. Winning vote shares have been falling for decades as voters spread their choices across more parties. The 2025 local elections showed the same pattern continuing.

HOW THE SYSTEM WORKS

Under First Past the Post, each constituency elects one MP. The candidate with the most votes wins, even if most people in that constituency voted against them. When voters were divided mainly between two parties, this imprecision was limited. As voters have spread their choices across five or six parties – as they increasingly do – the results become harder to defend.

In 2024, five parties each won more than one million votes. First Past the Post converted those votes into a Parliament that bears little resemblance to those choices. Labour won a landslide majority on a third of the vote. Reform UK won more than four million votes and five seats. The Liberal Democrats won 72 seats on 3.5 million votes – fewer than Reform. The Greens, with more than 1.8 million votes, won four seats.

These outcomes are not random. They are produced by a system in which geography, not vote share, determines representation. A party that places second in hundreds of constituencies wins millions of votes and almost no seats. A party with concentrated support in the right places wins a landslide majority on a minority of votes. As more parties compete, the distortions compound.

The same rules have produced large majorities for different parties at different times. In 2015, the Conservatives won a parliamentary majority on 36.8% of the vote. In 2019, they won again on 43.6%. First Past the Post does not systematically favour any one party. It favours whichever party happens to have the most efficiently distributed support at any given election – and punishes parties whose votes are spread too evenly across the country. That is a structural feature of the system, not a partisan accident.

4.1m

Votes cast for Reform UK in 2024. Five seats.

59.7%

Turnout at the 2024 general election, down from 67.3% in 2019.

WALES SHOWED IT CAN BE DIFFERENT

In May 2026, Wales elected its Senedd under a new proportional system. Turnout reached 51.6% – the highest ever recorded for a Welsh devolved election. The results tracked how people voted far more closely than any First Past the Post election would have done. Parties that had been locked out gained seats. The process worked.

Wales ran its election. The sky did not fall. What changed was that more votes counted toward the outcome.

51.6%

Turnout at the May 2026 Senedd election, the highest ever, under a proportional system.

THE PUBLIC AND PARLIAMENT HAVE MOVED

02

Most people already want the voting system to change. The question is whether the Government will act on that.

The British Social Attitudes survey is the most rigorous long-running measure of public opinion in Britain. Its most recent wave, published in February 2026, puts support for changing the voting system at 53%. Forty per cent want to keep the current system.

53% want the system to change

40% keep it

Where the public stands. British Social Attitudes 43, published February 2026. The remainder said neither or did not know.

That 53% is not a left-wing position or a losing-party reaction. Support for change is spread across the political spectrum. It reflects a broad, settled discomfort with results that most voters sense are not quite right – even when they cannot easily explain the mechanics.

LABOUR PUT IT PLAINLY

Labour's National Policy Forum, in 2023, agreed a position stating: "the flaws in the current voting system are contributing to the distrust and alienation we see in politics."

IN PLAIN ENGLISH

British Social Attitudes

NatCen's annual survey of public opinion, running since 1983. The most rigorous long-term measure of what the country thinks.

61%

Of Reform UK supporters want the voting system changed. So do 50% of Labour supporters (British Social Attitudes 43).

Labour has not committed to changing the system. The same document made clear that no change could be imposed from the top down and that no consensus yet existed on a replacement. But the party of government acknowledged, in its own words, that the problem is real. A National Commission would give the Government a structured, credible way to address that acknowledgement – without pre-empting an outcome that needs to be reached through a fair and independent process.

PARLIAMENT VOTED FOR CHANGE

In December 2024, the House of Commons voted in favour of moving to a proportional voting system – the first time in history. The vote was 138 to 136. It was a Ten Minute Rule Bill, not a government measure, and it carried no legal force. But for the first time, a majority of MPs in the chamber said yes.

THE GOVERNMENT HAS ALREADY CHANGED THE RULES

The English Devolution and Community Empowerment Act 2026 abolished First Past the Post for mayoral and Police and Crime Commissioner elections in England. From summer 2026 they use the Supplementary Vote, in which voters mark a first and second choice, on the grounds that the winner should be able to show broad support, not just the most votes on a narrow share.

The logic of that decision does not stop at the boundaries of local government. A system the Government judged inadequate for choosing metro mayors is the same system used to choose a Parliament. A National Commission on Electoral Reform would be the natural next step.

138 v 136

The Commons vote for a proportional system, 3 December 2024. The first time in history.

IN PLAIN ENGLISH

Ten Minute Rule Bill

A backbench MP's bill, debated briefly. A vote on it shows the mood of the House; it does not change the law.

IN PLAIN ENGLISH

Supplementary Vote

Voters mark a first and a second choice. If nobody wins outright, second choices decide between the top two.

WHY NOT JUST CHANGE THE SYSTEM?



If most people want change and the Government has acknowledged the problem, why not just change the system?

Because changing the voting system is not like changing a tax rate or a planning regulation. The choice of system determines how power is allocated, who gets elected, how parties organise, and how Parliaments function. Get it wrong and the consequences last not for one parliament but for a generation.

There is also no obvious single answer. Proportional representation is not one system – it is a family of very different approaches. Some produce highly proportional results but reduce the direct link between MPs and specific constituencies. Others preserve strong local representation but require larger multi-member seats. Some use open lists that give voters a direct choice of candidate; others use closed lists that give parties more control. Each involves genuine trade-offs that reasonable people weigh differently.

That complexity is not an argument against change. It is an argument for taking the question seriously.

IN PLAIN ENGLISH

Proportional representation

Not one system but a family. They share one aim: a party's share of seats should roughly match its share of votes.

To take just one example: a voting system that produces the most proportional results tends to use large multi-member regions, meaning your MP no longer represents just your town or city but a much wider area. A different approach – using a mix of constituency MPs and regional top-up seats – can balance proportionality with local links, but creates two classes of MP elected in different ways. Each choice involves a genuine tension between things voters reasonably value. The right answer depends on which trade-offs the country is prepared to accept. That is a decision for the public to make through a structured process – not one that any politician should make alone.

WHAT OTHER COUNTRIES DID

The countries that have handled voting system change well took the question seriously. New Zealand gave a Royal Commission on the Electoral System nearly two years to examine the options before its recommendation was put to a referendum. British Columbia assembled a Citizens' Assembly of 160 randomly selected members of the public in 2004; they spent a year examining different systems before recommending one and putting it to a vote. Ireland used the same approach in its Convention on the Constitution, which reviewed the country's voting system with randomly selected citizens making up two thirds of its members, and again in the Citizens' Assembly that worked through some of the most contested social questions in modern Irish politics.

In fact, most other countries have tackled this. Britain is the only established democracy in Europe that still elects its parliament by First Past the Post.

These were not slow or evasive processes. They were credible ones. The conclusions they reached carried public confidence precisely because the process that produced them was independent, thorough, and open.

160

Members of British Columbia's Citizens' Assembly, 2004. A year examining the options before recommending one.

1986

New Zealand's Royal Commission reported. The country voted for change in 1992 and 1993.

Britain has its own precedent – not an entirely encouraging one. The Jenkins Commission, established by the Labour government in 1997, produced a thorough report in 1998 recommending a new voting system. It sat without action for the best part of three decades. The lesson from Jenkins is not that expert commissions fail. It is that a good report without a mechanism to force a government response will not change anything. The National Commission on Electoral Reform is designed with that lesson in mind: the Government is expected to answer its findings in Parliament, in public, within a set time.

1998

The Jenkins Commission reported. Its recommendations sat unused for the best part of three decades.

THE DEEPER ARGUMENT

A deeper case for the commission format goes beyond complexity and precedent.

Britain has never had a proper national conversation about its voting system. If the Government were to legislate for a new system without one, the change would be contested from day one by everyone who felt their arguments had never been properly heard. Constitutional changes that are imposed rather than earned tend to create new grievances rather than settle old ones.

A commission changes that. When every side – those who want to keep First Past the Post, those who want to change it, advocates for different approaches – has had a genuine opportunity to make its case and see how that case was weighed, the conclusion carries a different kind of authority. It can be accepted as settled: not just as a political decision that the next government might reverse, but as the outcome of a fair process that the country went through together.

That is the real argument for this approach. Not just arriving at an answer. Arriving at an answer that lasts.

WHAT THE COMMISSION IS FOR



The National Commission on Electoral Reform would have a specific remit – and that specificity matters. A commission with a vague brief produces a vague result. This one is built around four questions that need to be answered in sequence.

- 1 What are the criteria for a suitable voting system for general elections in modern Britain – what should we want it to do?
- 2 Does First Past the Post meet those criteria?
- 3 Are there other voting systems that might meet them better?
- 4 Based on those criteria, which system would best serve modern Britain?

Starting with the criteria is the right way in. Before anyone can say whether First Past the Post is adequate, they need to agree on what adequate means. Fairness between votes and seats? Strong local accountability? Clear links between voters and their representatives? Stable government with decisive majorities? Different people will weight these differently. The case for the current system – that it tends to produce workable majorities and a direct link between an MP and their constituency – is part of what the commission examines, not something it sets aside. So is the case against it. Getting both sides of that argument into a structured, well-evidenced conversation is how the commission produces conclusions that hold.

4

Questions, answered in order.
The criteria come first.

IN PLAIN ENGLISH

Criteria

The tests a voting system is judged against – fairness between votes and seats, local links, stable government – agreed before any system is assessed.

The commission would also lead a national conversation while its work was under way: explaining the issues clearly, consulting widely, and preparing the ground for its final report.

WHAT THE COMMISSION CANNOT DO

The commission cannot change the voting system. Only Parliament can do that. The commission examines the evidence, consults the public, and makes a recommendation. Parliament then scrutinises the recommendation and decides whether to act on it.

That structure matters. A commission that cannot pre-empt Parliament cannot be dismissed as politicians choosing their own rules. The independence is genuine. The accountability is clear.

The commission
recommends. Parliament
decides.

HOW THE COMMISSION WOULD WORK



The National Commission on Electoral Reform would be made up of four separate bodies, each with a distinct role.

THE PANEL OF INDEPENDENT COMMISSIONERS

Up to seven people, none affiliated to any political party, appointed by the Government in consultation with relevant Select Committees. They would come from a range of backgrounds, skills, and communities, drawn from across the nations and regions of the UK. One would serve as an independent Chair.

This panel runs the commission. It gathers and weighs the evidence, oversees the consultation, and writes the reports. Its task is to ensure that recommendations reflect the values and preferences of citizens, informed by expert evidence and practical experience.

THE EXPERT PANEL

Seven academics and practitioners with expertise in voting systems, election data, and governance. Their role is to provide impartial advice and evidence to the commissioners and to the Voters' Forum - explaining how different systems have performed in the UK's devolved bodies and in other countries, modelling what each system would have produced at recent British elections, and examining how different systems affect diverse communities and under-represented groups. The expert evidence is advisory, not decisive.

7

Independent commissioners at most, none affiliated to any political party.

IN PLAIN ENGLISH

Select Committee

A cross-party committee of MPs that scrutinises a government department. The commissioners would be appointed in consultation with the relevant ones.

THE VOTERS' FORUM

Around 100 members of the public, selected to reflect the diversity of those eligible to vote in UK general elections.

This is the body that most distinguishes the National Commission from a conventional expert review. The Voters' Forum is a deliberative democratic body: ordinary people brought together, given access to the evidence, supported by professional and impartial facilitators, and asked to reach considered conclusions.

The Voters' Forum would identify the values a good voting system should embody, recommend the criteria for assessing different systems, evaluate trade-offs, and make recommendations.

This is not a survey or a focus group. Deliberative assemblies give participants time to engage with the evidence, hear from experts, ask questions, and change their minds based on what they learn. Ireland's Citizens' Assembly worked this way. It produced recommendations on some of the most divisive questions in modern Irish politics – recommendations that commanded respect across party lines because the process was seen as fair.

Participation in the Voters' Forum is not a specialist or professional commitment. Members are supported throughout – given clear, impartial information before any deliberation starts, and facilitated by professionals who ensure every voice gets a fair hearing.

~100

Members of the public in the Voters' Forum, chosen to reflect the electorate.

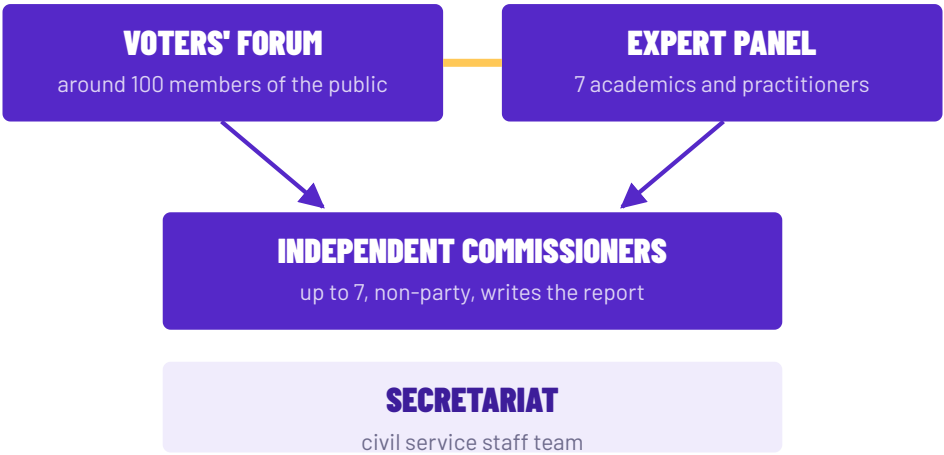
IN PLAIN ENGLISH

Deliberative assembly

Ordinary people, randomly selected, given time, evidence and expert help to reach a considered view. Used in Ireland, Canada and the UK.

THE SECRETARIAT

A civil service staff team, led by a senior civil servant, to support the commissioners administratively.



Four bodies, one report. The Voters' Forum sets the values and criteria and weighs the trade-offs; the Expert Panel advises both it and the commissioners; the commissioners write the report; the Secretariat supports them.

TIMELINE

The commission would be expected to launch within three months of the Government's announcement. Its final report would be due within 12 months of launch. Before the final report, the commission would publish interim findings on the first two questions – stimulating public debate and signalling the direction of travel.



Fifteen months from announcement to report. Timeline set out in the commission's terms of reference.

The commission would consult widely: through written evidence, an online consultation platform, public hearings, regional events, and polling. Any member of the public who wanted to contribute evidence would be able to.

None of this needs a new law. The blueprint exists. It has been backed by MPs, academics and civil society. What is needed is the decision to kick it off.

12

Months from launch to final report.

AFTER THE REPORT

The final report would be laid before Parliament – formally presented to MPs and peers, and published. The Government would then be expected to respond within three months, in a statement to the House. Select Committees would scrutinise that response. All evidence and recommendations would be published online.

None of this needs a new law. A Government can establish a commission of this kind by announcing it and appointing its members.

IN PLAIN ENGLISH

Laid before Parliament

Formally presented to MPs and peers, and published. A report laid before Parliament cannot be quietly shelved.

3

Months within which the Government is expected to respond in the House.

WHERE THINGS STAND

Britain now has a Prime Minister who openly supports proportional representation. That has never happened before.

Andy Burnham became Prime Minister on 20 July 2026. As Mayor of Greater Manchester he was one of the most prominent supporters of proportional representation in the Labour Party. At the Labour conference in September 2025 he told a packed fringe meeting that "PR's time has come." During the leadership contest that made him Prime Minister, answering questions from the public online, he wrote: "I am a strong supporter of electoral reform... I will seek to persuade my own Party of the need for a manifesto commitment to it in the next manifesto."

WHAT THE PRIME MINISTER HAS SAID SINCE

On 1 September 2026, in his first statement to the House of Commons as Prime Minister, he was asked twice about a National Commission.

Ed Davey, the Liberal Democrat leader, asked him to "launch a national commission to change politics". The Prime Minister replied: "there is a democracy taskforce working out of the Cabinet Office and I could certainly involve him in the work that that is doing. I am interested in political reform. I am interested in looking at how we restore trust in politics. I am prepared to look at all those issues - alongside the voting system, too."

Lisa Smart, the Liberal Democrats' Cabinet Office spokesperson, then asked him either to change the voting system before the next election or, failing that, to "at least commit to kicking off a national commission on electoral reform". His answer:

20 July 2026

Andy Burnham became Prime Minister: the first who openly supports proportional representation.

IN PLAIN ENGLISH

Democracy taskforce

The Cabinet Office group the Prime Minister referred to on 1 September 2026. Its membership, remit and reporting date have not been published.

**THE PRIME MINISTER, COMMONS, 1 SEPTEMBER 2026**

"Where I disagree with her is in saying that we should do that ahead of any General Election, because I believe there needs to be a mandate to make that change. There are different views in this House, but I believe that we will need to get a consensus at the next election, and if there is that consensus, a change can be made in the next Parliament."

He did not mention the commission.

Read carefully, the Prime Minister's position has three parts. He still supports proportional representation. He will not change the voting system in this Parliament, because he believes the public should endorse a change at an election before it is made. And he wants Labour's next manifesto to put the question to the public.

A Labour source told The Guardian in late August: "Andy remains strongly committed to electoral reform, and has indicated this is a matter for a future party manifesto, given a mandate would need to be secured for it."

WHERE PARLIAMENT IS

Meanwhile, MPs have moved further than at any point in living memory.

Alex Sobel, Labour MP for Leeds Central and Headingley, tabled an amendment to the Representation of the People Bill requiring the Government to report to Parliament, within three months, on the feasibility of establishing a National Commission on Electoral Reform. More than 170 MPs from eight parties signed it, including more than 80 Labour MPs – by his account, more than any other amendment this Parliament.

On 2 September 2026, when MPs considered the Bill's remaining stages, the amendment was ruled out of scope and was not debated. The Commons never voted on it. The Bill now goes to the House of Lords, and the decision on a commission rests where it always did: with the Government.

So the position: the Prime Minister agrees the system should change, polling shows a majority of the public agrees, more than a quarter of MPs have backed a commission, and the Government has not said yes.

170+

MPs from eight parties who signed the amendment for a National Commission.

IN PLAIN ENGLISH

Report stage

The point at which the whole House of Commons considers amendments to a Bill before passing it to the Lords.

8

Parties whose MPs signed the Sobel amendment, plus independents.

THE POLITICS, IN QUESTIONS



The argument for a National Commission is, at bottom, an argument about how a country makes a decision of this size well. The Prime Minister's own words raise the questions that matter, so this section answers them directly.

"Doesn't a change like this need the public's backing at an election?"

Yes. And that is the strongest argument for starting a commission now, not the argument against it.

Consider what a manifesto pledge to "introduce proportional representation" actually offers voters. Proportional representation is a family of systems, not a system. A pledge to adopt one of them, unspecified, asks the public to endorse a decision that has not been made. Britain has tried something like this before. In 2011 the country was asked to vote on the Alternative Vote: one system, chosen by politicians in a coalition negotiation, with no public deliberation beforehand. It was rejected by two to one, and the result has been used ever since as proof that the public do not want change - which is not what the vote tested.

A commission produces something different: a specific proposal, tested against agreed criteria, shaped by a representative group of the public, with the evidence and the trade-offs published. A manifesto that carries that proposal asks for the public's backing for a decision they can actually see. That is the difference between a slogan and a plan.

2011

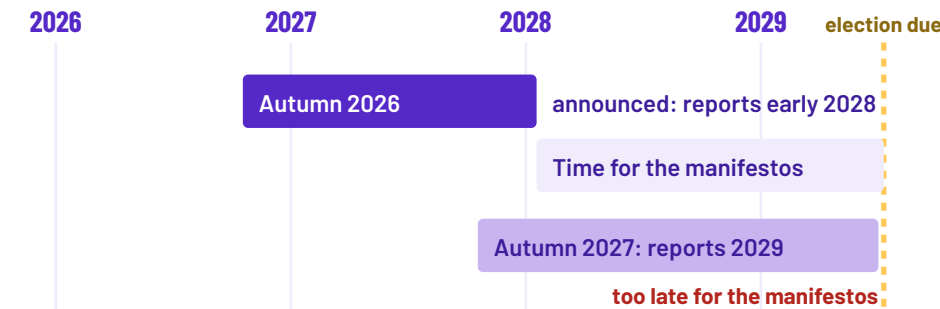
The Alternative Vote referendum: one system, chosen by politicians, no public deliberation. Rejected two to one.

IN PLAIN ENGLISH

Manifesto

A party's published programme at an election. Winning on it is treated as the public's consent to carry it out.

The timing follows from that. A commission announced in the autumn of 2026 launches by early 2027 and reports by early 2028 – in time to inform the manifestos written before an election due by 2029. A commission announced in autumn 2027 reports too late to make any difference to what parties put in front of voters. The Prime Minister's own route, taken seriously, requires the work to start in 2026.



The manifesto clock. Three months to launch, twelve to report. Start in autumn 2026 and the answer exists before the manifestos are written.

"Isn't a commission just proportional representation by the back door?"

No. The commission's terms of reference do not assume an answer. Its first job is to agree what a good voting system should do, and its second is to ask whether First Past the Post does it. If the answer is yes, the commission says so, and the argument is settled on evidence rather than assertion.

Supporting the commission commits nobody to a particular voting system. Its supporters include MPs who favour proportional representation, MPs who want a review and are undecided, and MPs who simply think a decision of this size should be made properly. What they share is a view about process, not about outcome.

IN PLAIN ENGLISH

Terms of reference

The published blueprint for the commission: its four questions, its four bodies, its timeline and how it consults. Reviewed by constitutional experts before publication.

None

Voting systems the commission is committed to in advance. Its first job is to agree the criteria.

"Isn't a taskforce inside the Cabinet Office enough?"

It is a different thing, doing a different job.

Little is public about the democracy taskforce the Prime Minister referred to: who sits on it, what it has been asked, or when it reports. What is clear from its description is that it works inside government. That is appropriate for many things – but not for this one. The question of how the country elects its Parliament is exactly the question that should not be settled by the people who were elected under the current rules, meeting in private, with no obligation to publish their evidence or report to Parliament.

A National Commission is independent of government by design. Its commissioners cannot be party politicians. Its evidence is published. Its Voters' Forum gives a representative sample of the public a real role in shaping the conclusions. And its report is laid before Parliament, with the Government expected to respond in the House within three months. A taskforce can inform ministers. It cannot give the country an answer it will trust.

IN PLAIN ENGLISH

Cabinet Office

The department at the centre of government that supports the Prime Minister and coordinates work across Whitehall.

"Why not wait and put it in the manifesto?"

Because the manifesto needs the answer, not the question.

A party that goes into an election promising to look at the voting system has promised very little; a party that promises a specific, well-evidenced change has promised something voters can hold it to. The commission is how the first becomes the second. Waiting for the manifesto to start the work means the manifesto cannot contain the result.

"Won't this distract from the things the Government was elected to do?"

A National Commission is seven independent commissioners, seven experts, a civil service secretariat and a Voters' Forum of around 100 people, working for a year. It runs alongside government, not instead of it. Ministers are consulted; they do not run it. The Government's role is to announce it, appoint it, and respond to it when it reports.

Set against that, the Prime Minister has said that restoring trust in politics is central to what his Government is for, and that this Parliament "needs to be a circuit breaker for the country". A fair, independent examination of how the country's votes are counted should be part of that job, not something that sits apart.

"Didn't the 2011 referendum settle this?"

It settled one thing: that the public did not want the Alternative Vote, as presented in 2011, in the circumstances of 2011. The Alternative Vote is not a proportional system, and the campaign that year was fought largely on other issues. No wider question was asked. The 2011 vote is an argument for doing the job properly this time, with the public involved before a proposal is made rather than only at the end.

"What if the commission recommends keeping First Past the Post?"

Then the country will have had the argument, in the open, and reached a conclusion. Supporters of change would have to accept it. That is the point of a fair process: it binds everyone, including the people who asked for it. A Government that is confident in the current system has nothing to lose from the commission. A Government that suspects the current system would not survive scrutiny has a harder decision - but not a better argument.

"Who decides in the end?"

Parliament. The commission recommends; it cannot legislate. The Government is expected to respond to its report in the House within three months. MPs and peers then decide whether, and how, to act. Nothing in the commission's design takes that decision away from the people elected to make it.

IN PLAIN ENGLISH

Alternative Vote

Voters rank candidates. The lowest is knocked out and their votes transfer until someone has a majority. Not proportional. Rejected in 2011.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

ONE DECISION

The plan for a National Commission on Electoral Reform has been drawn up in detail, reviewed by constitutional experts, and put before Parliament. It does not require a new law. It does not commit the Government to any outcome. It asks the Government to do one thing: put the question of how Britain votes through a fair, independent, public process, and respond to what that process finds.

The Prime Minister has said he wants the voting system to change and that the change should carry the public's backing. A commission is how that backing is earned. The decision is his.

Open Britain will keep this guide updated as the position changes. The current edition, and everything that stands behind it, is at www.open-britain.co.uk.



WHERE THIS COMES FROM

Everything in this guide is drawn from verified sources. Where figures have appeared in different forms in earlier publications on this subject, we have used the current, accurate version and explained any discrepancy.

MOST DISPROPORTIONATE ELECTION IN BRITISH HISTORY

Electoral Reform Society, "A System Out of Step: The 2024 General Election", 10 December 2024. Corroborated by peer-reviewed academic analysis (Miori, Political Quarterly, 2025).

THE 2024 GENERAL ELECTION - VOTES AND SEATS

House of Commons Library, Research Briefing CBP-10009, "General election 2024 results". Labour 33.7%, 411 seats (63%); Reform UK 4.1 million votes, five seats; Liberal Democrats 3.5 million votes, 72 seats; Greens 1.8 million votes, four seats.

PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR CHANGING THE VOTING SYSTEM: 53% (KEEP: 40%)

NatCen Social Research, British Social Attitudes 43, published 10 February 2026. Note: some earlier documents on this subject cite 60% – that figure comes from the previous wave, British Social Attitudes 42. BSA 43 is the current wave; this guide uses its figures throughout.

DECEMBER 2024 HOUSE OF COMMONS VOTE

Hansard, HC Deb, 3 December 2024 (Ayes 138, Noes 136). Sarah Olney MP's Ten Minute Rule Bill on proportional representation.

LABOUR PARTY POLICY

Labour Party National Policy Forum Final Policy Documents, agreed July 2023. The passage in full: "the flaws in the current voting system are contributing to the distrust and alienation we see in politics – but there is no consensus for a new system. Any proposed change to our voting system must be carefully thought-through – it cannot be dictated by political leaders or forced upon the country from the top down." This guide cites the first sentence accurately and in context.

REPLACEMENT OF FIRST PAST THE POST FOR MAYORAL ELECTIONS

English Devolution and Community Empowerment Act 2026, Royal Assent 29 April 2026, which reintroduces the Supplementary Vote for mayoral elections; Written Ministerial Statement HCWS65, 21 May 2026.

THE COMMISSION DESIGN

"A National Commission on Electoral Reform: Terms of Reference", published September 2025. All descriptions of the commission's structure, remit, and process are drawn directly from that document.

WELSH SENEDD ELECTION, MAY 2026

Senedd Research, "Senedd election: an initial analysis of the results", May 2026 (turnout 51.6%, the highest at any Senedd election); Electoral Reform Society, "How Wales voted in the 2026 Senedd election".

EARLIER COMMISSIONS AND ASSEMBLIES

Independent Commission on the Voting System (the Jenkins Commission), established December 1997, reported 29 October 1998. Royal Commission on the Electoral System, New Zealand, reported 1986; referendums 1992 and 1993. British Columbia Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform, 2004 (160 members). Irish Convention on the Constitution, 2012–2014 (66 citizens, 33 politicians), which reviewed the Dail voting system; Irish Citizens' Assembly, 2016–2018.

ANDY BURNHAM BECAME PRIME MINISTER ON 20 JULY 2026

GOV.UK, Prime Minister's Office.

ANDY BURNHAM'S PREVIOUS STATEMENTS ON THE VOTING SYSTEM

"PR's time has come": Labour Party conference fringe, Liverpool, September 2025, as reported by the Electoral Reform Society. "I am a strong supporter of electoral reform... I will seek to persuade my own Party of the need for a manifesto commitment to it in the next manifesto": Reddit "Ask Me Anything", July 2026, as reported by the Electoral Reform Society.

THE PRIME MINISTER IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS, 1 SEPTEMBER 2026

Hansard, HC Deb, 1 September 2026, cols 34–40, statement on the Direction of Government: exchanges with Ed Davey MP and Lisa Smart MP.

LABOUR SOURCE

The Guardian, 25 August 2026 (Jessica Elgot).

BRITAIN'S VOTING SYSTEM IN EUROPE

Electoral Reform Society, "Which European countries use proportional representation?": the UK is the only democracy in Europe that elects its parliament by First Past the Post; France uses a two-round system and Belarus, which is not a democracy, a majoritarian one.

THE SOBEL AMENDMENT

Representation of the People Bill, report stage amendments, New Clause 31, "Duty to Report on the feasibility of establishing a National Commission on Electoral Reform", tabled by Alex Sobel MP. Supporter list at bills.parliament.uk (177 MPs as at 2 September 2026, of whom 85 Labour: Labour, Liberal Democrat, SNP, Green, Plaid Cymru, Alliance, SDLP, Your Party and independents; Alex Sobel and press reports have cited 185). "More than any other amendment this Parliament": Alex Sobel, LabourList, 27 August 2026.

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This guide is the first in the Nutshell Guides series. Future editions will cover other important questions in British democracy.

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