

Rycroft Review confirms long-standing risks to UK democracy, now the Government must act, says Fair Vote UK

The publication of the Rycroft Review into foreign financial interference in UK politics confirms what has been clear for years; that the UK's political system remains vulnerable to money, influence, and opaque funding flows.

The review's recommendations mark an important step forward, recognising the scale and seriousness of the threat. In particular, its focus on tightening donation rules, strengthening oversight, and addressing gaps in enforcement reflects concerns long raised by civil society and experts.

However, *Fair Vote UK* says the evidence has been available for years and the solutions are already well understood, an uncomfortable truth.

Many of the review's core recommendations echo those set out in the APPG on Electoral Campaigning Transparency's landmark 2020 report, *Defending Our Democracy in the Digital Age*, which called for stronger transparency, monitoring, and deterrence measures to safeguard UK elections.

That report, based on evidence from over 70 experts and organisations, warned that outdated rules, weak enforcement, and the rise of digital campaigning had created systemic vulnerabilities that could be exploited by both domestic and foreign actors.

Fair Vote UK said the Rycroft Review now removes any remaining ambiguity.

Kyle Taylor, Executive Director of Fair Vote UK, said:

"We have known about these risks for years. We have studied them, evidenced them, and set out clear, practical solutions.

What the Rycroft Review does is confirm, once again, that the UK's political finance rules are not fit for the world we now live in.

The question is no longer what needs to be done. The question is whether the Government is willing to do it.

The Representation of the People Bill is the moment of truth. If it fails to close these gaps, it won't be because the evidence wasn't there it will be because the political will wasn't.

At this point, inaction is a choice.”

While the review supports the direction of current legislative efforts, Fair Vote UK warned that partial measures will not be enough to address the scale of the problem. Without stronger, enforceable safeguards including greater transparency on donations, meaningful limits on big money, and a regulatory system that reflects how influence operates in practice existing vulnerabilities will remain.

Fair Vote UK said the Representation of the People Bill now represents a clear test for the Government: whether it will act on the evidence in front of it, or allow known risks to persist.

“The UK is not lacking ideas or evidence,” Taylor added. “It is lacking action.”

Fair Vote UK said the Elections Bill is now the moment to act, and warned that failure to strengthen the rules would leave existing risks in place.

ENDS

NOTES

- *Fair Vote UK* is a non-partisan organisation working to strengthen democracy and ensure political decisions are shaped by voters, not by money or hidden influence.
- Recent polling for *Fair Vote UK* found that 78% of people say they have little or no influence over political decisions.

Fair Vote UK is calling for:

1. Greater transparency on political donations
2. Caps on big money in politics
3. Stronger safeguards on lobbying and access
4. Rules that reflect how influence is built and exercised in practice

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