



Autonomy
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Business and Professional Women UK



The Rt Hon Andy Burnham MP

Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London
SW1A 2AA

28th September 2026

Dear Prime Minister,

Please find enclosed an open letter organised by Fair Vote UK: “Dear Andy: Don’t Overlook One of Our Country’s Greatest Untapped Assets,” signed by 50 organisations from across UK civil society.

Together, the signatories represent expertise spanning democracy, economic justice, health, housing, equalities, online safety, climate and many other areas of public policy. While our organisations work on diverse issues, **we are united by a common belief: that the United Kingdom is home to an extraordinary depth of expertise, experience and practical policy knowledge that can help your Government deliver meaningful, lasting change.**

The letter is intended in the spirit in which it is offered—as a constructive invitation for more meaningful collaboration. It reflects the belief that government and civil society each bring distinct strengths, and that the country’s greatest challenges will be met most effectively when those strengths are brought together through genuine collaboration.

Over many years, organisations across civil society have developed evidence, tested solutions, worked alongside communities and contributed to public policy in ways that have improved countless lives. We hope the enclosed letter encourages a renewed and more strategic relationship between Government and civil society, one built on mutual respect, practical cooperation and a shared commitment to delivering for the public.

We would welcome the opportunity to continue that conversation with you, your ministers or your officials in the months ahead, and to explore how the expertise represented by the signatories to this letter might best contribute to your Government’s ambitions. Thank you for taking the time to consider the letter. We wish you and your Government every success in the years ahead.

Yours sincerely,

Kyle Taylor

Founder and Executive Director, Fair Vote UK

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On behalf of the 50 signatory organisations



Dear Andy: Don't overlook one of Britain's greatest untapped assets

A new government arrives with momentum, ambition and, inevitably, impossible expectations.

You have spoken about hope, renewal and the possibility of doing politics differently.

Millions of people have responded to that message because, after years of division and drift, they want a government that is prepared to tackle problems at their roots rather than merely manage their symptoms. No one should underestimate the scale of that task.

Building a programme for Government at speed is difficult. Every department faces competing priorities. Every policy choice is constrained by economic realities, parliamentary arithmetic and the practical demands of implementation. That is precisely why we are writing.

We are 50 organisations from across UK civil society - working on democracy, economic justice, climate, housing, health, racial justice, disability rights, violence against women and girls, communities, poverty, transparency, online safety and many other issues. Together, we represent decades of accumulated expertise.

For the past fifteen years, while governments have come and gone, civil society has not stood still. We have researched the evidence. We have listened to those with lived experience. We have tested ideas. We have worked with communities. We have piloted solutions. We have built coalitions. We have learnt what succeeds, what fails and what can realistically be delivered.

The civil society of today is not the caricature sometimes portrayed in political debate. It is not simply a collection of campaigners always asking Government to do more. It is a community of practitioners, policy specialists, researchers and organisers who understand the constraints within which governments operate. **We recognise that good policy must be politically achievable, economically credible, capable of implementation and, where circumstances demand it, delivered with urgency rather than unnecessary delay.** We understand that governing means balancing ambition with practicality while also recognising when the country cannot afford to wait. The challenge is not simply to imagine a better future, but to build a practical path towards it.

That experience is a national asset. It has been built despite more than a decade of constrained public investment and within a charitable and philanthropic funding environment that has become ever more challenging.

Across civil society, organisations have continued to generate ideas, evidence and practical solutions while operating with limited resources, small teams and increasing demand. Far from being a hobby or an optional extra, this work has shaped legislation, informed regulators, influenced public policy and improved countless lives. Imagine what could be achieved if that expertise were treated not simply as something to consult, but as a genuine collaborator in governing.

No incoming government should have to begin with a blank sheet of paper when so much knowledge already exists outside Whitehall. **Across almost every policy area, there are organisations that have spent years developing workable proposals, learning from international experience, evaluating interventions and refining solutions.**



forRefugees



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We are often asked by Government departments, agencies and regulators to provide research, evidence and insight, or to host events or provide Ministerial engagement opportunities, which we gladly do without being compensated for the resources and time spent on this work. Too often, however, they remain episodic rather than strategic: consultation rather than collaboration. We believe there is an opportunity to build something much stronger.

The campaigners amongst us - often raising flags about the risk of serious individual or societal harms - are used to warm words but slow action from Whitehall. Attendance by Ministers at Parliamentary or other stakeholder events is fleeting: good for their PR and social media feeds, or to bank for inclusion in their quarterly meeting returns, but far from equating to meaningful, respectful engagement with the sectors they are supposed to represent.

A government committed to genuine, systemic change should see civil society not as an external pressure or noisy irritant, but as a critical friend and enabler in delivery. The relationship should not be transactional or occasional. It should be ongoing, collaborative and rooted in mutual respect. Government brings democratic legitimacy and the authority to act. Civil society brings expertise, lived experience, trusted relationships and long institutional memory. Together, those strengths are far greater than either can achieve alone.

This is not an offer to criticise from the sidelines. It is an offer to help with hope. We stand ready to contribute ideas, evidence, practical experience and constructive challenges. We want this government to succeed not because success belongs to one party or one Prime Minister, but because the country needs it to succeed.

The challenges facing the UK are too significant for the Government to face alone. One of the country's greatest resources is already here: hundreds of organisations and countless experts who have spent years preparing for the moment when meaningful change once again became possible.

Britain has no shortage of ideas. It has no shortage of expertise. What it has too often lacked is a government willing to draw fully upon them. We believe this can be different. We stand ready to help make it so and we look forward to hearing from you.

Signed,

Fair Vote UK, Kyle Taylor, Founder and Executive Director

50:50 Parliament, Lyanne Nicholl, CEO

Amnesty International UK, Felix Jakens, Director of Campaigns and Communications

Asylum Matters, Louise Calvey, Executive Director

BARAC UK, Zita Holbourne FRSA, National Chair and Co-founder



Business and Professional Women UK, Ruth Galwey, National President

Centre for the Study of Corruption, Liz David-Barrett, Professor

City of Sanctuary UK, Sian Summers-Rees, Chief Officer

Civil Exchange, Caroline Slocock, Director

Compassion in Politics, Jennifer Nadel, CEO

Connected Routes CIC, Leyla McLennan, Founding Director

Elect Her, Hannah Stevens, CEO

Electoral Reform Society, Dr. Jessica Garland, Director of Policy and Research

Fairness Foundation, Jason Bunting, Head of Politics and Advocacy

forRefugees, Amber Ritson, CEO

Freedom Friday, Kevin Steele and Sarah Mullen, Co-Chairs

Free UK Genealogy, Denise Colbert, COO

Friends, Families and Travellers, Sarah Mann, CEO

Gambling Lived Experience Network, Helen Donohoe, Interim Chief Executive

Helen Bamber Foundation, Alison Pickup, CEO

IMIX, Jenni Regan, CEO

Kent Refugee Action Network (KRAN), Razia Shariff, Director

Latin American Women's Rights Service, Monserrat Escudero, Policy and Communications Manager

Make Votes Matter, Emma Harrison, Chief Executive

Migrant Democracy Project, Lara Parizotto, Executive Director

Muslim Charities Forum, Fadi Itani OBE, CEO

My Life My Say, Catrin Trudgill, Campaigns Lead

Online Safety Network, Maeve Walsh, Director

Open Britain, Mark Kieran, CEO

Oracle Head and Neck Cancer UK, Julie Child, Executive Director

Patriotic Millionaires, Rebecca Gowland, Executive Director

Quakers in Britain, Paul Parker, Recording Clerk

Radix Big Tent, Ben Rich, Chief Executive

Refugee Action, Tim Naor Hilton, CEO



Reset Communities for Refugees, Amina Khanom, Director

Rights of Women, Estelle du Boulay, Director

Roma Support Group, Mihai Bica, Policy and Campaigns Coordinator

Shout Out UK, Matteo Bergamini MBE, Founder and CEO

Tanio Ltd, Lisa Davies, Chief Executive

The Autonomy Institute, Dr Will Stronge, Director

The Citizens, Clara Maguire, Executive Director

The Community Lab Initiative CIC, Betty Berthebaud, Founder Director

The Jo Cox Foundation, Olivia Field, Chief Executive Officer

The William Gomes Podcast, William Gomes, Director

Tulia Group CIC, Rumbidzai Bvunzawabaya, Founder and CEO

Turn2us, Thomas Lawson, CEO

UK Anti-Corruption Coalition, Louise Russell-Prywata and Sue Hawley, Co-Chairs

UKCSWA, Cat Sutherland, Co-Chair

Unlock Democracy, Tom Brake, CEO

Women for Refugee Women, Carenza Muggleton-Arnold, Head of Campaigns