

DIRECT DEMOCRACY & SORTITION ASSEMBLIES

A Civic Architecture for the British Isles

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Public Explainer — Plain English Guide

A plain English guide — what is wrong with the current system, and how government by the people would actually work

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“We inherit the lessons of the past, not its chains.”

— DD&SA Founding Principle

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A living document — subject to civic deliberation and democratic revision.

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Something has gone wrong with British politics. Most people can feel it, even if they can't always name it. They vote, nothing changes. They complain, nobody listens. They disengage, and the system carries on regardless.

This is not a coincidence. It is a structural problem — one built into the very design of representative democracy. And structural problems require structural solutions.

Direct Democracy & Sortition Assemblies (DD&SA) is that solution. It is a full civic architecture, designed to replace the current system with one that genuinely puts inhabitants in charge — not as an aspiration, but as a legal and constitutional fact.

1. What is wrong with the current system?

Parliamentary democracy was designed for a world that no longer exists. It was built on the assumption that ordinary people lacked the time, access, and information to govern themselves — and so they should elect a small class of people to do it on their behalf.

That bargain has broken down. Here is what the evidence shows:

- Policy outcomes in the UK and US consistently reflect the preferences of wealthy elites and organised interest groups, not the general public. Researchers Gilens and Page demonstrated this empirically: ordinary inhabitants have near-zero influence on policy when their preferences conflict with elite interests.
- Politicians are not representative. They are overwhelmingly drawn from a narrow social class, educated at a small number of institutions, and disproportionately connected to corporate interests through lobbying and party funding.
- The party system distorts decision-making. MPs vote along party lines rather than exercising independent judgement. Career incentives — selection, re-election, promotion — override honest deliberation.
- Long-term decisions are systematically neglected. Issues that require thinking beyond a five-year electoral cycle — energy infrastructure, climate adaptation, intergenerational debt — are routinely deferred, diluted, or ignored.

None of this is a failure of individual politicians. It is the predictable output of a system designed the way this one is. Replacing the people changes nothing if the structure remains intact.

2. What is DD&SA?

DD&SA is a constitutional framework for inhabitant governance. It has two core components:

Direct Democracy

Inhabitants vote directly on major questions of law, frameworks, and public spending. Not through their MP. Not through a party manifesto. Directly.

This is not a new idea. Switzerland has operated a form of direct democracy for over a century. The quality of its long-term governance, public trust, and civic engagement consistently outperforms comparable representative systems.

Sortition Assemblies

Where expert deliberation is required — to examine evidence, hear from specialists, and develop detailed frameworks — DD&SA uses Locally Seated Assemblies (LSAs): bodies of randomly selected inhabitants, drawn by lot in the same way as jury service.

This is called sortition, and it has a long history. Ancient Athens used it. Modern research confirms it works. Inhabitants in sortition assemblies, when given time, evidence, and structured support, make decisions that are more considered, more representative, and less corrupted by partisan interest than elected parliaments.

The key principle is this: the people making decisions look like the rest of us — because they are us. Not career politicians. Not party loyalists. Ordinary people, selected fairly, serving their community.

DD&SA does not ask you to trust politicians to do better. It removes the conditions that make politics corrupt in the first place.

3. How would it work in practice?

DD&SA is a full constitutional architecture — a civic blueprint, not a campaigning slogan. It specifies, in detail, how inhabitant governance would operate at every level. Here is the outline:

Locally Seated Assemblies (LSAs)

Each region of the British Isles would have an LSA: a randomly selected body of inhabitants serving fixed, non-renewable terms. LSAs deliberate on framework questions, hear expert evidence, and make recommendations. An Independent Epistemic Secretariat (IES) supports them — a permanent professional body whose sole job is to provide accurate, balanced information and challenge factual errors.

The Citizen Vote

Major decisions — legislation, constitutional changes, significant public spending — are put to a direct public vote. The question is set by the LSA. The public votes. The result is binding.

Safeguards

DD&SA is not naive about risk. The architecture includes a full Threat and Vulnerability Register covering 35 identified risks across eight domains, from epistemic capture to foreign interference. Each threat has a designed structural response built into the framework.

Transition

DD&SA includes a five-phase, quality-gated implementation plan. It does not propose tearing everything down overnight. It proposes a managed, constitutional transition — from the current system to inhabitant governance — with clear milestones, democratic legitimacy at each stage, and legal continuity throughout.

4. Why should I trust this more than what we have?

That is exactly the right question to ask. Here is the honest answer.

No system of government is perfect. DD&SA does not claim to be. What it claims is that it is structurally superior to the current arrangement in the following measurable ways:

- Decisions are made by people who look like the population, not a self-selecting elite. Random selection eliminates the class filter built into electoral politics.
- There is no career incentive to deceive. Sortition members cannot stand for re-election. They have nothing to gain by telling the public what it wants to hear.
- Deliberation is structured and evidence-based. The Independent Epistemic Secretariat ensures decisions are made on accurate information, with dissenting expert views actively represented.
- Long-term thinking is protected. Without electoral cycles, sortition assemblies can address generational problems without political cost.
- Corruption is harder to sustain. You cannot lobby a randomly selected assembly in the way you lobby a party with career politicians who need funding and media support.

The framework has been stress-tested — including against the World Economic Forum's Great Reset model — and has been evaluated against Bernard Manin's principles of government, Robert Dahl's democratic criteria, and Philip Pettit's conception of non-domination. It is not a pamphlet. It is a constitutional architecture.

The structural engineer builds the foundation and the first floor, then walks away — and becomes just another inhabitant.

5. What can you do?

DD&SA is not a political party. It does not ask you to vote for anyone. It asks you to be part of a civic movement that is building the intellectual and institutional case for a fundamental change in how this country is governed.

Here is what you can do right now:

- Read the full framework at our website. The complete constitutional treatise, *A Civic Architecture for the British Isles*, is available in full.
- Share this guide. The single most powerful thing you can do is put this in front of people who feel the same way you do about politics — and there are millions of them.
- Join the DD&SA Foundation. We are establishing the formal institutional home for this work. Early supporters shape the direction.
- Start a conversation. In your community, your workplace, your social circles. The question is simple: if not this system, what?

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