

## Week Three Direct Democracy



Britain has a *parliamentary democracy* because Parliament is sovereign and members of government are drawn from parliament and accountable to Parliament. We are a *liberal democracy* because we have freedom of speech, expression etc. and our government is held to account by parliament and the public. Our system is seen as a *representative democracy* because we elect representatives to govern on our behalf, for example our local M\_\_.

However, at times we have used *direct democracy* within our representative system, usually when important constitutional issues are at stake. Direct democracy is more radical than consultative democracy (e.g. e-petitions) because government usually accept the decision, e.g. "Brexit means Brexit". Referendums such as the EU or Scottish Independence allow the public to determine government policy on vital decisions.

Electronic petitions are when the public can sign an official e-petition online (TGGs had a climate change one) and if the numbers reach 100,00 then it could be discussed in the House of Commons - but that does not mean that a law will be made or changed.

Other forms of consultative options also exist, which is when governing bodies at local or national level want to consult the public to see their likely reaction to their proposed politics. For example the expansion of Heathrow airport.

There is also the option to recall an MP by starting a petition if an MP is sentenced to be imprisoned or suspended from the Commons for more than 21 days. If 10% of the voters in the constituency sign the petition, then a by-election is held. In 2019 a Labour MP for Peterborough and a Conservative MP for Brecon in Wales were both recalled.

### WHY the increase in direct democracy?

People are better e\_\_\_\_\_ and the press and the internet have generated more opportunity for p\_\_\_\_\_ power. Although political parties have declined in m\_\_\_\_\_ people are still interested in political issues.

Referendums and initiatives are common when important political and constitutional issues are at stake eg? They have either a yes or no answer and normally only one question is asked – **e.g?** Referendums can be local, regional or national. Parliament and government decide if a referendum will be held and what the wording of the question will be and. They can be binding upon a government but not in the UK, **why?**

This is in contrast to **INITIATIVES** which occur in several US states (California, Colorado, Florida and Michigan) where the people themselves call for a referendum. There is a minimum number of signatures required. In 2010, an initiative for the legalisation of marijuana in California was rejected. **Can you find any other examples and Why could this be problematic?**

### Task 1: Slide 12 - Research Task:

- Why was a national referendum called for the first time in 1975?

- Why was 1997 significant in the history of referendums?
- What body regulates referendums and why is this important?
- What demands are there for a referendum at the moment? How likely is it this will happen?
- And what would you hold a referendum on, if you had the power to decide what to put to the people?

Task 2 - Slide 13 - Research one national and one regional referendum from the list on slide 9. For each:

- Why was the referendum called?
- What was the question?
- How many voted? Percentage turnout?
- How many voted yes/no? %s
- What happened as a result?

You can also use the Politics Review article on Brexit to help you as this has lots of helpful information - [Week3 onwards Politics Review EU referendum explained.pdf \(tggsacademy.org\)](#)

Task 3 - Watch the Brexit documentary at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uSI41yeQQQY>

Task 4: Read the Politics Review article on e-democracy - [Week3 onwards Politics Review digital and Edemocracy.pdf \(tggsacademy.org\)](#) and note how technological advances and the rise of e-democracy has allowed opportunities for more direct democracy? Use headings to help you and some specific examples from the article.

Task 5: Read the debate article for and against the use of referendums - [Week3 onwards Politics Review Article on Referendums Debate.pdf \(tggsacademy.org\)](#) and create a visual billboard style page highlighting which side you most agree with.