

# Compass Annual Report

2017

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Published October 2017 by Compass

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Compass  
81a Endell Street  
London  
WC2H 9DX  
[info@compassonline.org.uk](mailto:info@compassonline.org.uk)

Compass is a home for those who want to build and be a part of a Good Society; one where equality, sustainability and democracy are not mere aspirations, but a living reality.

We are founded on the belief that no single issue, organisation or political party can make a Good Society a reality by themselves so we have to work together to make it happen. Compass is a place where people come together to create the visions, alliances and actions to be the change we wish to see in the world.

#### WEBSITE

[www.compassonline.org.uk](http://www.compassonline.org.uk)

#### FACEBOOK

[facebook.com/CompassGoodSociety](https://facebook.com/CompassGoodSociety)

#### TWITTER

[@CompassOffice](https://twitter.com/CompassOffice)

This has been our biggest year ever. The idea of a Progressive Alliance- long championed by Compass - was a term readily understood and supported on doorsteps across the country in the general election. We helped make the weather as never before. Off the back of the Brexit vote and then the Richmond Park by-election, we could move fast because we had built the relationships and ideas for a more collaborative politics. There will be more peaks, and some troughs, in the months and years ahead. But the 21st century will increasingly demand our plural system of politics - the challenges we face are too big for anything less than this alliance-building approach.

All of it is down to the dedication of our staff, present and past, to our funders and partners, to our activists and to our growing band of members and supporters. Compass feels the future and we can only shape it together.

## HOW TO GET INVOLVED

There are a heap of ways to get active under the Compass banner:

- Come to or help out at an event
- Get involved in your local group or start your own!
- Write for our blog - we especially encourage submissions from women and under-represented groups
- Donate to support one of our campaigns



Participants at a workshop investigating the idea of a 'Good Europe', April 2016

# Meet the team



## NEAL LAWSON

Working with the Management Committee and the staff, Neal helps direct Compass. He has long believed that politics needs a new way of thinking, organising and being - he wants Compass to be it. Neal was author of *All Consuming* (Penguin, 2009), he is an advisor to *We own it!*, is a Contributing Editor of the social democracy journal *Renewal* and is an Associate Member at the Bauman Institute at Leeds University. He writes regularly for the *Guardian* and the *New Statesman*. In the past he worked as a trade union researcher, an advisor to Gordon Brown and ran a communications company. As well as his role with Compass he works on issues and projects for Jericho Chambers.

[neal@compassonline.org.uk](mailto:neal@compassonline.org.uk)



## FRANCES FOLEY

Frances takes a lead on the strategic work of Compass, including Progressive Alliance organising, events and campaigning work. She has a background in political engagement and participatory democracy, and a Master's in Political Science. In 2015, Frances ran *Unlock Democracy's* *Unlock Magna Carta* project - a series of events, projects, workshops and performances based on political power in 2015. Frances is always cheered up by messages from members and supporters, so drop her a line if you want to get involved with any of Compass' work.

[frances@compassonline.org.uk](mailto:frances@compassonline.org.uk)

## REMCO VAN DER STOEP

Remco looks after our membership. Before joining Compass, he busied himself with political organising and campaigning in South London and the Netherlands. His professional background is in public engagement: opening up decision-making beyond those who hold power. Remco is very keen to grow Compass' membership and always happy to talk to members about getting active.



[remco@compassonline.org.uk](mailto:remco@compassonline.org.uk)

We are helped in everything we do by the Management Committee, the Associates, Local Group Organisers and many more volunteers and advisors. Compass has always been a huge collective enterprise.

'We put the concept of Progressive Alliances on the agenda, through our local mobilisation, high-level events, media coverage and petitions calling on the national leadership to work better together.'

# Highlights

Good Europe: as part of our exploration into what makes a Good Europe, we produced a final report, and sparked an open conversation about how to make a more social Europe as part of our report launch event in April 2016.

At our Post-Brexit Alliance Building conference in July 2016, attended by over 1,000 people, we heard from speakers from across progressive politics - politicians, community activists, writers - all convinced by the need to build alliances.

At our local listening event in Barking and Dagenham, October 2016, the community got together to voice their ideas, worries and aspirations and what could be done about it - how to forge a stronger sense of identity in the area, protect local services and foster a better relationship between councillors and communities - one which started in that room, with the first listening exercise.

Richmond Park by-election, December 2016 - following the decision by the Richmond + Twickenham Green Party not to stand in the by-election, we called a public meeting to discuss the possibility of an alliance behind the progressive candidate best-placed to beat Zac Goldsmith. Organised within the space of 3 days, we had a packed hall of 300 people, all keen to see alliances forged to unseat the Tory and strike a blow for progressive politics. We distributed leaflets calling on people to use their vote effectively - and helped play a part in a win for the Lib Dem candidate Sarah Olney - the first test of a progressive alliance in an election!

A large, diverse audience is seated in a church, clapping and listening attentively during a conference. The church has high ceilings, arched windows, and wooden pews. The audience is composed of people of various ages and ethnicities, all focused on the front of the church. The lighting is warm, with orange and purple hues from the windows and stage lights.

'At our Post-Brexit Alliance Building conference in July 2016, attended by over 1,000 people, we heard from speakers from across progressive politics - politicians, community activists, writers - all convinced by the need to build alliances.'

# Progressive Alliance

The announcement of the snap election in April 2017 sent the Compass office into a whirlwind of activity which lasted the next 8 weeks. Faced with the prospect of a Tory landslide, we gathered all our energies and threw ourselves into a full-on national Progressive Alliance campaign, to support progressive candidates from many different parties all across the country. Within the first few days, we received hundreds of messages from our members and supporters, were flooded with donations, gathered a crack team of campaigners around us, set up a War (and Peace) Room, launched a new website and begun to shout loudly about the potential of progressive alliances. Over the coming weeks, we focussed both on how to encourage tactical voting to protect some seats and flip others and, more importantly, how to foster alliances on the ground, at a local level, between progressives who wanted to fight with - rather than against - one another for a progressive majority.

## **DURING THE CAMPAIGN WE ACHIEVED A LOT**

- 42 Progressive Alliances, with 25 progressives elected, winning 22 of our 31 target seats in which we campaigned online and on the ground for a progressive candidate.
- Provided a recommendation for a tactical vote in 211 constituencies, with progressives winning 112 of them. 100,000 people used our tactical voting tool.
- Signed up 400 volunteers, holding over 40 volunteer-led events and a sold-out national launch event in London with 1,000 people present.
- 30,000 new supporters on our mailing list.
- New local groups popping up across the country and running successful grassroots campaigns - such as in Oxford, Carlisle and Cardiff.



Sirio Canós Donnay at the launch event for the Progressive Alliance, May 2017

Our campaign put the concept of Progressive Alliances firmly on the agenda, through our local mobilisation, high level events, media coverage and petitions calling on the leadership of all progressive parties to work better together.

The impact of Progressive Alliances is clear. Whilst progressives performed on average 1.9% better at this election than the last: in seats where there was an alliance, they performed on average 5.7% better; and in our target seats, where we also ran a ground campaign, they performed 9.5% better.

And this election also revealed the future potential of progressive alliances in seats across the country. Overall, in 62 seats the combined progressive vote was higher than that of the newly elected Tory MP, meaning that an alliance could have helped replace a Tory with a progressive. In total, progressive parties gathered 2.5 million more votes than the Tories and UKIP combined, which our broken electoral system fails to reflect.

The election proved not only the force of an idea - that progressives should work together to win - but also the power of locally-based, co-operative and inclusive grassroots politics. Compass will continue to work with our local branches to further this politics of collaboration, not competition, and to open up space for progressives to communicate and co-operate in the name of our common values.

# Other campaigns and projects

## **GOOD LONDON**

Good London was a year-long investigation into the life of the country's capital, asking its citizens about their experience of community, work, play, transport and identity. The report - to be published next month - sets out a bold and inventive vision for a Good London which speaks both to individuals' desire for change, and for the need to preserve what they value most about London life.

## **EVERYDAY DEMOCRACY**

Since late last year, we've been in a partnership with the Raymond Williams Foundation, conducting research into the democratisation of the everyday and identifying and interviewing innovators across a range of fields. We've been investigating how community groups, local organisations and individuals experiment with new forms of democratisation of power, and we've begun to explore relationships between these grassroots agents and more formal politics, such as parties and institutions. Focusing on housing and community and development, media and technology, education, culture and the arts, and the food system, we've discovered a wealth of experience, insight and experimentation in radical civil society. Next we'll be building an online platform to present and disseminate these new developments.

## **A SOCIETY WITHOUT POVERTY**

Funded by the Webb Memorial Trust, we have been working on this project for two years. It's a deep dive into how we might reframe the debate around poverty and inequality and build the case for a good society. You can find the key publications on our site: Something's Not Right, Secure and Free, The Context for a World Without Poverty and the last piece out soon, which outlines 10 ways to build a society without poverty. More important than the reports, there has been a huge

outreach programme to local organisations - especially by Michael Orton in the West Midlands. The project has been invaluable in helping us develop our thinking about inequality and a good society, theories and practices of change - and relationship building with local and national organisations.

## UNIVERSAL BASIC INCOME

There is no probably silver policy bullet, but UBI might be the bronze? An unconditional, non-withdrawable payment to everyone, UBI could be a social-political game changer. We know it is contentious, but it opens up so many key debates about the good society and the good life, the future of work, the rise of the robots and how our current social security system is unfit for purpose. We published [An Idea Whose Time Has Come?](#), with support from the [Joseph Rowntree Foundation](#). It's the perfect introduction to the policy and makes it feel feasible.

We have just received more support, this time from the [Friends Provident Foundation](#) to do more work on UBI, in the form of a 10-year acceleration model to work out how to go from a modest entry level form of UBI to a full or near-full scheme that would meet all our basic material needs. It's a really exciting project.

Ideally we would like to find the funds to run a big national conversation on UBI - is it the answer to our dreams?



Esther Obiri-Darko at our Post-Brexit Alliance-Building event, July 2016

# Discussion and debate

Over the past year, we've also had a flurry of popular publications.

We've commissioned pieces on the future of the political party, modern Conservative strategy, the Left's response to Brexit, hegemonic alliances and Basic Income, to name just a few.

## **Check out a small selection of highlights from Compass' writings and publications:**

- [21st Century Politics: is the Party over? Or is it just kicking off? by Indra Adnan](#)
- [Mayism without May: the crisis of the Regressive Alliance and the challenge of Corbynism, Ken Spours](#)
- [The Left and Brexit: facing up to the realities of an interdependent world, by Jon Bloomfield](#)
- [Why Labour needs alliances to win, by Matthew Sowemimo](#)
- [Our popular Universal Basic Income blog series, edited by Malene Bratlie](#)

# Compass around the country

Local groups have multiplied in the last year. In response to the call on progressive parties to work together at the General Election campaign, progressive alliance groups started springing up everywhere during the General Election, at such a rate that we had trouble keeping count. Within the last 18 months, we have welcomed new groups in Carlisle, Salisbury, Oxford, North London, Cornwall- with new groups launching in Bristol, Totnes, Surrey and West Yorkshire over the next few months. Altogether that would be a total of 17 local groups running events, forging local partnerships and acting as a hub for progressives of every hue in their local area.

At the General Election, these groups were pivotal in facilitating local agreements between political parties, launching grassroots campaigns in seats with an alliance candidate, and grabbing headlines, such as South West Surrey Progressive Primary, which backed the National Health Action Party, getting three of its key organisers expelled from the Labour Party as a result.

Out of election time, our groups are busy hosting events across a range of topics - from Progressive Alliance common platforms in Birmingham and Cornwall, to discussions on devolution and the new local mayor in Merseyside, and the newly launched Democracy Cafe in Salisbury.

There will be a participatory session at our Annual Gathering especially for local groups to discuss how we sustain and grow our activities across the UK - so come down to find out all about our local activity. There will be seasoned local group activists, as well as curious and eager beginners, so whether you've been involved before or not, it's a great time to get stuck in.

If you're looking to be part of a local group, but there isn't one currently near you, do get in touch and we can send you all you need to get a group going in your area.

# Finances

## INCOME AND EXPENDITURE FOR THE YEARS ENDED 31 MARCH

	2017 (£)	2016 (£)	2015 (£)
Member income	77,170	65,860	57,901
Event income	13,711	708	14,080
Grant income	193,654	74,935	153,153
Other Income	1,031	10,224	8,500
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>285,566</b>	<b>151,727</b>	<b>233,634</b>
Staff costs			
Payroll costs	68,490	60,371	88,982
Consultancy - Chair's service	57,000	60,000	60,000
VAT on Consultancy	11,400	12,000	12,000
Other staff costs	11,151	9,738	6,260
Office costs	23,424	23,858	28,254
Activity costs			
Event costs	9,821	5,287	18,794
Publication costs	3,610	4,195	4,949
Project Costs	44,432	19,213	5,275
Other costs			
Bank Charges	5,874	4,414	4,160
Fundraising costs	416	7,632	-
Other costs	-	4,352	4,154
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>235,618</b>	<b>211,060</b>	<b>232,828</b>
Surplus/(deficit) for year	49,948	(59,333)	806
Transfer of Development Fund balance to General Fund	-	57,870	-
Movement on General Fund for year	49,948	(1,463)	806

## BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 MARCH

	2017 (£)	2016 (£)	2015 (£)
Debtors and accrued income	6,363	4,277	29,248
Cash	44,646	11,779	47,208
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>51,009</b>	<b>16,056</b>	<b>76,456</b>
Creditors	2,309	-	18,371
Deferred Income	-	17,304	-
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>2,309</b>	<b>17,304</b>	<b>18,371</b>
Net Assets /(Liabilities)	48,700	(1,248)	58,085
Representing:			
General Fund	48,700	(1,248)	215
Development Fund	-	-	57,870
Net Assets /(Liabilities)	48,700	(1,248)	58,085

Our finances strengthened during 2016-17, with major projects on Theories of Change, Europe and then the Progressive Alliance. These together, with increasing income from members, resulted in us making a substantial surplus for the year. We ended 2016-17 in a strong financial position.

2017-18 threw us almost immediately into the unexpected General Election, and the huge Progressive Alliance campaign. This was strongly supported by individual donors, and we believe this has strengthened our member income base for the future.

Can I thank everyone who has contributed to Compass financially, and encourage other members and supporters to do so - however small or large the amount you can afford, it all comes together to build our organisation.

Mark Cooke

## MAJOR FUNDERS

Individuals and organisations providing funding of £5,000 and over during the year

2015-16		2016-17	
Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust	£15,000	Friedrich Ebert Stiftung	£5,000
Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust	£20,960	Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust	£15,000
Ruth Lister	£5,000	Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust	£30,880
Trevor Chinn	£7,500	Network for Social Change	£5,586
Trust for London	£40,000	G Roddick	£20,000
Webb Memorial Trust	£25,750	Trust for London	£30,000
		Andrew Wainwright Reform Trust	£10,000
		Webb Memorial Trust	£45,360
		T Wyatt	£9,500

The past 12 months have shown us the power of progressive solidarity. As we look forward to creating new spaces for progressive politics to flourish, including through our new project - the Common Programme - we know more than ever that our power lies with you, our members and supporters. The expanded 'we' people experienced through Progressive Alliances at this election has reaffirmed the need to pursue a political culture that is curious, generous, open, inclusive, exploratory, co-operative and democratic.

A huge thank-you to everyone who has worked with us throughout this past year. We hope you continue to help us build Compass, to be bigger, better and bolder for the times ahead.