

# COMPASS ANNUAL REPORT 2020



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### **About Compass**

Compass is platform for a good society, a world that is much more equal, sustainable and democratic. We build networks of ideas, parties and organisations to help make systemic change happen. Our strategic focus is to understand, build, support and accelerate new forms of democratic practice and collaborative action that are taking place in civil society and the economy, and to link that up with state reforms and policy. The meeting point of emerging horizontal participation and vertical resources and policy we call [45° Change](#). The question we are trying to help solve, as we endeavour to #BuildBackBetter, is not just what sort of society we want, but, increasingly, how to make it happen?

## 2020: looking back

This report covers the year 1 April 2020–31 March 2021, a year of experimentation, growth and expansion for Compass. We've stepped up to match the moment and honed in on the strategic aim of winning a progressive majority government.

In 2020 we:

- Launched the Basic Income Conversation
- Created a live weekly (now fortnightly) members' podcast, It's Bloody Complicated
- Grew the Compass membership and supporter base
- Founded five new local groups
- Ran several hard-hitting campaigns to call on the government to Build Back Better, create a just and green budget and introduce an Emergency Basic Income.

It's been a tumultuous year for all of us, but there's also been plenty of good moments to remember. All the way through, we've been supported, challenged, encouraged and improved by our membership. So to all of you we say: thanks for being with us, and for being a part of the journey.

What has been amazing over the course of the pandemic is that technology has brought us together and ensured that everyone is engaged – the days of being London-centric are over for good.



## It's Bloody Complicated

In early 2020, before the pandemic hit, we were already gearing up to start a podcast. In March we recorded our first ever episode of **It's Bloody Complicated**, with Clive Lewis MP – the first and only time it's been in person!

Since then, we've had 40 episodes, had conversations with over 70 guests and been downloaded more than 27,500 times.

If you're feeling like you might've missed out on some choice episodes, or just fancy a trip down last year's memory lane, [here's Grace Barnett's 2020 round-up](#) of her favourite live calls from 2020.

## Basic income: it's time to talk

In early 2020, Compass launched the **Basic Income Conversation** (BIC) to begin a deep national debate about a basic income – why we should do it, how we could do it and what difference it would make.

With the onset of the Covid crisis in March, the question of UBI shot up the political agenda, and in April we brought together 110 MPs from 7 different parties to back the call for a **Recovery Basic Income** – which was then backed by over 29,000 of you, our members and supporters.

A Basic Income has since attracted many more backers, including 105 candidates for the Welsh Parliament, 200 council candidates across England, the launch of the Scottish feasibility report and many more trials in the works.

BIC continues to make the case across civil society, **building a powerful coalition** and **drawing out stories** of how a basic income could improve mental and physical health, open up work and training opportunities, and lead to greater community cohesion.

Ready to join the Conversation? [Check out their recently launched toolkit](#) on how to hold your own BIC in your home, workplace or community.

## Making some noise

Over the course of the year, Compass drew together different coalitions to make big interventions when it was necessary.

In May, we helped gather over 350 organisations, from trade unions to campaigns groups to faith groups, to launch a powerful demand to **'Build Back Better'** – long before the slogan was ubiquitous (we like to think Biden nabbed it from us!). The alliance included organisations like

the **Trades Union Congress** alongside the **Confederation of British Industry**, and brought together public figures like Rowan Williams and Victor Adebowale alongside union leaders like Frances O’Grady and academics like Richard Wilkinson.

The statement caught the mood of the country, and demonstrated that there was real appetite to address the inequalities and injustices brought to light and intensified by the pandemic.

This April, we renewed our call for a just and climate-conscious recovery, launching a petition with **Clive Lewis** and **Caroline Lucas** to ensure that Build Back Better really means something.

We’ve always known that our recovery from the crisis must look closely at questions of power and participation. That’s why, earlier this year, we called on Labour to ensure that any plans for a **constitutional convention** are citizen-led, transparent and deliberative.

Building Back Better from the pandemic demands the best ideas, the boldest vision and the brightest coalition from across the progressive movement. We will continue to help build these alliances for a more just and equal Britain in 2021 and beyond.

## Convening and collaborating

On top of the weekly podcast call, Compass has also been busy with online events. We’ve hosted **over 20 public events** over the past year – from book launches to political rallies – bringing progressives together to discuss the big political ideas of our time.

A particular highlight was **Build Back Better: How?** – a week of online events from 22nd–31st October 2020 that followed on from our Build Back Better campaign in the summer and highlighted examples of the good society in action across the UK and the world.

The timing of these events in the UK, when a second national lockdown was looking likely, meant that there seemed to be plenty of interest in connecting online. The emphasis on what is already happening meant that the events were upbeat and focused on practical action, giving participants tips, tricks and inspiration for both local practice and national policy.

The series drew over 1,000 sign ups and ultimately around 620 attendees over the course of six events, with an average of 90–100 per session. We had very positive feedback from participants and attendees:

*‘Thanks to all our speakers – I really enjoyed it, lots of practical ideas ... Together We Can.’*  
– Kieran Breen

*'[S]o many inspiring speakers and examples of good things happening, a wonderful antidote to the depressing everyday news. Living in Preston I wouldn't normally have been able to access most of these, so that's been one of the big pluses of the pandemic for me!'*  
- Marjorie

To round off the year, we held a big political rally, 'A Progressive Majority – Building the Power to Win', to relaunch our **Progressive Alliance** work. Over 1,200 signed up to hear Clive Lewis, Caroline Lucas, Layla Moran, Jon Cruddas and Tommy Sheppard call for greater cooperation and a clearer vision for progressives, to win power at the next election.

On the back of that launch, we created **Compass Party Groups**, internal networks within the Labour Party, the Green Party and the Liberal Democrats, who make the case for collaboration, organise across and between parties and build capacity among members. Each party has its own strengths – its own rich history, its traditions of thought and action, its heroes and its values. We need the best of every party to have a hope of meeting these current challenges head-on. [Find out more about party groups and sign up to yours.](#)

## Finding our way with ideas

Compass's work is always animated by ideas – the radical, bold and complex visions, policies and analysis that will help us win power and govern well when we do.

We've been lucky enough to be surrounded by generous contributors, writers and thinkers, who challenge us to change our thinking – and our doing – and we thank them for their time and wisdom.

## Imagining the good society

Over the course of the past year, we've produced **over 30 publications and reports**, addressing topics as varied as belonging and 'progressive patriotism', inequality and the top 10%, and poverty in the 21st century. Our longer-form pieces take time and commitment to produce – and help us with that deep, harder thinking that allows us to orientate ourselves in times of confusion.

On our blog, where we regularly host weekly contributions, we've been excited by the breadth of topics: a piece on a green revolution could be followed by a piece on future generations thinking; a piece exploring ecological interest rates could precede a piece on young people's right to vote. An upcoming special series will showcase younger writers.

We're always on the lookout for new writers – especially those under-represented in mainstream politics – so if you're keen to submit something, do [get in touch](#) with our Communications Officer, Gabriel.



## New Power

One of our biggest projects, which we launched in March, is **New Power**. We are looking at how we scale and accelerate new forms of collaboration in politics, public services, communities and enterprises. We had over 300 of you at the launch event and will be asking you for [examples of new power](#) in your lives over the rest of the year. We seek nothing less than a **new social and economic operating system** for the 21st century. Let no one say we don't think big.

## The Compass family

**Over 1,090 new members** have [joined Compass](#) over the past year, and our supporter base has grown to **50,000**. Members join us for many reasons: some want to help us build bridges between parties; others are excited about the idea of [45 Degree Change](#) or winning a basic income. But all are united in their conviction that we need a progressive government to help us realise our vision of a Good Society – one that is much more equal, democratic and sustainable. If you know someone who fits this bill, don't wait! Now is a good time to join Compass, as we suit up for a year pushing for a progressive victory at the next election. It's going to take everyone.

**Local groups** are the core of this strategy, and we've welcomed five new ones this year in Leicestershire, Devon, Bristol and the West of England, Norfolk, and Richmond, North Yorkshire, as well as seeing the welcome relaunch of our Taunton group. More are in development. Our groups are hubs of activity, organising meetings and events, building campaigns locally and linking up with our work nationally. Perhaps most importantly, they provide a space where progressives from all backgrounds can meet one another and make big plans – and we need that connection more than ever.

## Compass core team

Compass is powered by a small but dedicated staff team, and we like to think that even when our staff move on to other things, they still stay connected. Over 2020, we said goodbye to **Remco van der Stoep**, **Jack Jeffrey** and **Grace Barnett**, all of whom helped us grow our list, run our internal systems, establish the podcast, produce some excellent publications and found new local groups. Most of all, they were top-notch colleagues, and continue to be involved: Remco helps lead our Compass Greens group, Jack has been pulling together our recent publications and Grace is working with us on an exciting new podcast series with the Orwell Youth Prize. As we like to say, Compass is like Hotel California: you can check out, but you never leave!

In 2020 we also welcomed **Frances Foley** back into the Compass fold as Deputy Director, from a year away campaigning for a Citizens' Convention. We've also been joined in recent months by **Gabriel Everington**, our new Communications Officer, who has hit the ground running, picking up the moderation of our podcast, steering our publications to print and supporting local groups up and down the country to prepare for May and beyond. Welcome to Gabriel! We're also very grateful to **Zoya Khan** who joined us recently on a work placement and helped us gather evidence of progressive co-operation from councils around the country and commission new writing from younger authors.

As ever, we've been headed up by **Neal Lawson**, who has helped us navigate the past year, driven our alliance-building activity and encouraged us to keep our eyes on the horizon.

We're also indebted to **Small Axe**, our partners in membership engagement (and scheming!), who have done all the behind-the-scenes work to grow our Compass family, keeping them connected to our work and helping us grow our reach and impact. Thanks to all members of the SA team.

And of course we're enormously grateful to our **Board** members who toil away behind the scenes to keep Compass honest, focused and ambitious, and to our **Associates** and **Council**, who power our thinking and help us plan for the future. Recognition must also go to our stalwart **local group leaders**, who anchor Compass action and ideas across the country. Members of all of these bodies give their time and expertise for free, and Compass couldn't exist without them. Thank you.



## Finances

Compass operated as an unincorporated association until October 2019. Following a resolution of members, the association was dissolved and its assets and activities were transferred to the company: Compass Together for a Good Society Ltd.

The following figures cover both entities, so as to provide a consistent view of the financial position in both years. These are not the statutory accounts of the company, which have been sent to members and filed with Companies House.

Mark Cooke  
Treasurer

### Income and expenditure for the years ended 31 March

	2020	2019
	£	£
<b>Member income</b>	111,124	89,632
<b>Event income</b>	4,898	4,647
<b>Grant income</b>	77,942	65,200
<b>Other Income</b>	8,850	-
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>202,814</b>	<b>159,479</b>
<b>Staff costs</b>		
Payroll costs	11,955	51,946
Consultancy	44,116	43,017
VAT on Consultancy	8,823	8,603
Other staff costs	65,005	13,686
<b>Office costs</b>	<b>35,728</b>	<b>33,705</b>
<b>Activity costs</b>		
Event costs	15,557	1,819
Publication costs	3,586	8,030
Project Costs	500	9,070
<b>Other costs</b>		
Bank Charges	4,078	4,414
Fundraising costs	30,831	6,000
Other costs	-	10
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>220,179</b>	<b>180,300</b>
<b>Deficit for year</b>	<b>(17,365)</b>	<b>(20,821)</b>

## Balance sheet as of 31 March

	2020	2019
	£	£
Debtors and accrued income	15,903	5,600
Cash	75,310	37,156
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>91,213</b>	<b>42,756</b>
Creditors	17,305	11,833
Deferred Income	50,350	-
Development Loans	10,000	-
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>77,655</b>	<b>11,833</b>
<b>Net Assets</b>	<b>13,558</b>	<b>30,923</b>
Representing:		
General Fund	13,558	30,923
<b>Net Assets</b>	<b>13,558</b>	<b>30,923</b>

## Major funders during 2019-20

To ensure transparency of its funding, Compass voluntarily discloses all funders who have provided more than £5,000 during the year.

Funder	Amount	Purpose
Barking and Dagenham BC	£6,797	45 Degree Change
Centris	£45,625	Basic Income
D Joffe	£15,000	Progressive Alliance
European Cultural Fund	£17,517	Citizens Convention
Friends Provident Charitable Foundation	£5,600	Basic Income
IHL Trust	£12,700	Basic Income
Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust	£7,500	Up to Us
Network for Social Change	£12,250	Citizens Assembly on Brexit
New Weather Institute	£6,000	Rapid Transition Alliance
Ruth Lister	£10,000	Development
Trevor Chinn	£10,000	Development/Core Funding

## Treasurer's report

During 2019–20, working with Small Axe, Compass continued its programme of building its member income. Income increased significantly over the previous year to just over £200,000.

Expenditure on staffing, events and fundraising also increased, resulting in a small deficit for the year. This included spending on relaunching our website and improving and building our membership database as investments for the future.

The base of income built in 2019–20 has enabled Compass to return to surplus in 2020–21, with less dependence on grant funding, although this remains important to take forward some projects.

Compass retained only a small reserve at the end of 2019–20, but has now begun to build this back to a more acceptable level.

I would like to thank all of our members and supporters who have responded to our appeals for funding, whether they give a regular sum, or have provided one-off donations. In addition, some supporters with the means to do so have made more substantial contributions or loans and we thank them for their generosity.

We are also grateful to all of the organisations that have funded our work through project funding.

*Mark Cooke*  
*Treasurer*





## Looking forward

For the year ahead, we've got big plans to pursue more radical and more effective progressive collaboration, built on a platform of transformative ideas – from devolution and rapid transition to a post-carbon economy, to proportional representation and a basic income.

Here are some of our starting points, and we'd love to know what you think:

- Our long-term strategy remains the same – **a new politics for a new and good society**
- Our key immediate focus is the **Progressive Alliance** as the method to defeat the Tories and instill a new collaborative politics
- Here **PR** and the Progressive Alliance are two sides of the same coin: Labour backing PR enables a Progressive Alliance to take shape – hence our work supporting [Labour for a New Democracy](#)
- We will build the foundations for a **desirable and feasible** Progressive Alliance:
  - Developing a **Progressive Platform** – including basic income, universal basic services, a Green New Deal, PR and wider democratic reform, care and a shorter working week
  - **Building trust** at all levels of the progressive parties, from leaders to activists
  - Focusing work in **key target areas**.

Other strategic priorities include:

- The future of the UK and the demand for independence, which cannot be ducked – we can only engage with it
- The polarisation of society and how we deal with difference – essential issues to confront in order to build a good society.
- This all speaks to a wider good society agenda we need to continually explore.

**This has been the oddest of years. We've all struggled and, as ever, some unfairly have suffered most. But we come out of it more determined than ever to build our good society. We can't wait to meet you again in person. Until then, stay safe and stay hopeful.**



# COMPASS IS THE PRESSURE GROUP FOR A GOOD SOCIETY

We believe in a world that is much more equal, sustainable and democratic. We build alliances of ideas, parties and movements to help make systemic change happen.

**JOIN COMPASS TODAY**

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

The logo for Compass, featuring a stylized '@' symbol followed by the word 'compass' in a lowercase, sans-serif font.

 CompassGoodSociety

 CompassGoodSociety

 CompassOffice