ANNUAL REPORT 2026

Compass

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About Compass Compass is the pressure group for a Good Society, a world that is much more equal, sustainable and democratic. We build alliances of ideas, parties and movements 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 those with state reforms and policy. The meeting point of emerging horizontal participation and vertical resource and policy we call 45 Degree Change.

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Director's Report

Neal Lawson (Director)

It has been an extraordinary year for Compass, the biggest and the most influential we've had in our 23-year history.

This year the Prime Minister of our country made a speech at his party conference, much of which could have come from anyone at Compass. He stated that care should come before profit, that 40 years of neoliberalism needed to be reversed and, perhaps more important than anything for us, that he wasn't just committed to proportional representation but had a plan to get us there.

At last year's AGM members quite rightly questioned me and the team about our early support for Andy Burnham. Was he good enough? Could he win? And what after all did it mean for other progressive parties? These were all fair points. Backing Burnham was a gamble, but we felt we'd seen enough to know that he was serious about big change, pluralism and proportional representation. And despite the torrid time he'd just experienced at Labour's previous conference, we were confident that eventually the Labour Party would turn towards him.

This happened sooner and faster than we thought. But the failure of Starmerism, which we also saw coming, was fast becoming apparent. At the same time, pressure from the Greens morally, politically and electorally was shifting the Overton window to the left. No Polanski would mean no Burnham. We provided polling, platforms, policy and support to Andy.

By featuring him at our ***Change:HOW?*** event in May 2025, we gave him his first big national platform. And then by launching Mainstream we put in place one of the building blocks for the change the country needed. Compass is now seen to have more influence because it has been influential. We should celebrate that.

Job done. So far. We are at base camp looking up, which is better than tumbling down the rocks watching Nigel Farage clamber to the top. But there is still a mountain to climb. So how do we actually reverse 40 years of neoliberalism and rewire the state, not least to deliver on PR? How do we make sure on immigration and welfare that the government come up with realistic progressive answers? How do we fill the void in Labour's lack of focus on the environment? And finally, how do we ensure the progressive majority in this country is mobilised at the next election not just to defeat Reform but defeat the causes of Reform?

Compass has more potential than ever to help shape the future of our country. So much of this is down to you — our members. It is your support that gives us the freedom and the legitimacy to take risks in terms of taking opportunities like backing Andy. And here I'd like to thank some of our supporters who were able to give more at this important time, they are listed in the Treasurer's Report.

I'm hugely grateful to all our partners and supporters who have made this historic year possible. Not least the organisations who have dived into the Better! campaign, those who have worked with us on winning PR, and the Our Water, Our Way coalition fighting for public ownership of water. I'd like to thank all the staff, not least Luke (who we have loaned to Norway for a while) who was incredible in terms of launching Mainstream and backing Andy, and Lena who runs the organisation with such deft skill. And I'd like to thank the Board for their support and input, particularly Shelagh and Barry the outgoing co-chairs and Caroline and Jon who have stepped up to the plate.

And my final thanks go to you. Whether you pay to back what we do, attend the events like ***Change:NOW!***, come on the podcasts and other calls or are active in a local group or around an issue — whether you are Green, Liberal Democrat, Labour, Plaid Cymru, SNP or no party - Compass would be impossible without you.
I can't tell you how wonderful it is to have a job in which you get to do great things with such great people. I'm so honoured.

Politics has never been more volatile or important. No one knows what the polls are going to do in two months let alone two years. The threat of national populism may wax and wane, but it will become ever more dominant if one thing happens - progressives fail to make the hope of a good society not just desirable but feasible. Compass knew that this fragmented and dangerous world was coming, and only by modelling how to do politics differently could we hope to navigate our way to a better future.

We've had a good year. Now we must do more and better.

In this last year we helped change the government, now we must help change the country.

With my love and gratitude,

Neal

Campaigns

Lena Swedlow (Deputy Director, Politics & Campaigns) & Clementine Boucher (Campaigns Officer)

Introduction

This year, we set out to turn the crises in our politics into a break with the 'business as usual' that led us there.

And we went from win to win. That was thanks to our influence in getting Andy Burnham to No.10, and the campaigning we've done to tie together grassroots campaigners, civil society and our allies in Parliament.

None of it would have been possible without our members.

PR is on the horizon

We set out with the mission to get the Prime Minister to commit to a National Commission on our voting system.

First, we built ironclad support for PR in Parliament, armed with our report Lifting the Lid on Britain's Pressure Cooker Politics: How Inequality and Neoliberal Capture Broke First Past the Post. It exposes a direct link between FPTP and the stark inequality across Britain, and how it has put Nigel Farage on the doorstep of No.10.

With tens of thousands of supporters and our coalition partners, we got more than 100 Labour MPs to back an amendment to the Representation of the People Bill calling for electoral reform. A majority of Labour MPs now back a review of our voting system.

We also backed Andy Burnham, a long-time supporter of electoral reform, to become Prime Minister. But experience tells us that without a commitment, politicians' support is just empty words. So this summer, with Make Votes Matter and Unlock Democracy, we delivered a petition signed by over 24,000 of you, demanding he start the process of electoral reform in his first hundred days.

And he did.

It's you, our members, who powered this sea change. But the work isn't done. We helped get Andy to base camp; now we must make sure he climbs the mountain.

With some senior government MPs already pushing back, we're ramping up our campaign.

Compass is uniquely placed to broker compromise, push all parties to commit in their manifestos, and show MPs the public support they need to be brave.

Let's continue, steadfast, and get PR done for good.

We're Seeing the Tide Turn for Our Water

For forty years, we were told there was no alternative to privatised water. Through our campaigning, we've finally cracked that consensus.

In March, we teamed up with Clive Lewis MP and members of our coalition to host an MP briefing in Parliament with frontline water campaigners. 107 MPs showed up: almost one in five. They heard it straight from the real sewage campaigners who featured in Dirty Business: privatisation has failed, and public ownership is the answer.

In September we got MPs to go further. In a packed Westminster Hall debate, triggered by an activist petition, 50 of the 69 MPs present made the case for public ownership, many for the first time. The campaigners behind the petition were there, and even pop star Becky Hill came to support from the public gallery. A year ago, this would have been impossible.

We spent the summer preparing for that moment, bringing the coalition together to brief MPs, run drop-ins and bring the evidence to Parliament. With a change in the Labour leadership, MPs finally felt they could speak their minds and make the case for bold, radical policy. That's the culture change we've spent years pushing for, and the one Andy Burnham has promised to deliver.

Weeks later, he announced he would lift Thatcher's ideological ban on public ownership, and pushed Ministers to be bolder on the failing Thames Water.

How Do You Defeat the Far Right? Be Better!

In August, we launched Better!, a broad civil society campaign to counter national populism and its causes.

The forces of division work in parallel. On the one hand, power, wealth and information are increasingly centralised at the top. On the other, those same people pump out narratives that scapegoat migrants and marginalised people, when they're the ones who've broken Britain.

We need to change the operating system, and the story. That starts with making our media more honest, our taxes fairer and our votes count. Change these three things, and we can change everything - for the Better! Watch our launch video here.

Since launch, we've built and amplified our message in creative ways:

- We released Larry's Lodger, a political survival game where you must hold on as PM while keeping your most ambitious pledge. Thousands of you have played it.
- With Clean Up Westminster, we made a comedic video exposing the link between record political donations, unfair votes, taxes and media.
- We'll soon launch our toolkit to teach campaigners, organisers, politicians and spokespeople how to combat far-right narratives and build country-wide support for a new politics.

Conclusion

We didn't just help get Andy Burnham to Downing Street. We're making sure that whatever he does next, on water, on PR, on everything else, is a real break with business as usual. And we're making sure it's built openly, democratically, and with room for disagreement, the way lasting change always has to be.

Our members are the reason we've got to this moment, and our members will take us further. Thank you. We're so grateful you're with us.

Local Groups & Organising

Lena Swedlow (Deputy Director, Politics & Campaigns)

Across 2026, Compass continued to build the relationships, ideas and local organising needed to turn progressive cooperation into a practical force for change. From national political conferences to community coffee mornings, campaigning and local alliances, our work has been rooted in a simple belief: progressives achieve more when they work together around the changes people need.

The 2026 Local Elections underlined the scale of the challenge. Political fragmentation is here to stay, and our electoral system must be able to represent this new reality. Where progressives fail to organise around material change, insecurity and political alienation leave space for the far right to grow.

We stepped up our efforts to build the conditions for progressives to challenge not only Reform, but the causes of its rise. Before polling day, we launched an open letter calling on progressive leaders to cooperate at the next general election and confront the crises facing the country. Signatories included actors Sir Mark Rylance and Lolly Adefope, economist Yanis Varoufakis and human rights campaigner Peter Tatchell, alongside organisations including Best for Britain and Compassion in Politics.

In May, nearly 800 progressives gathered at Rich Mix for ***Change:NOW!***. With more than 70 speakers across 18 sessions, and keynotes from Green Party leader Zack Polanski, economist Gary Stevenson and Compass co-chair Caroline Lucas, the event brought together people from across progressive parties and beyond them. It was a powerful demonstration of both the appetite for a progressive majority and the growing body of ideas and programmes that could unite one.

Watch our video about the day here.

We continued this work through events like our online National Emergency Briefing in July, fringes at autumn party conferences, and engagement across Labour, the Liberal Democrats and the Greens. Our Spring Conference event with Liberal Democrat members filled the room and sparked lively discussion, revealing a strong appetite for progressive organising and ideas within the party. Engagement with Greens also gathered momentum - with statements on the Gorton and Denton by-election, to a letter from Green leaders in Makerfield, and a member's meeting on 26th October deliberating our path forward after the 'Zionism is Racism' motion.



Local Groups

National change depends on local, grounded relationships. Our network continued to develop, with nine active local groups, two groups in formation and six getting started.

Our active groups are York & North Yorkshire, Brighton & Hove, Lewes, Oxfordshire, Northern Devon, North East, South West Surrey, Stratford-upon-Avon, and East Devon. Hertfordshire, and South London are forming and building steering groups while already running events (special thanks go to Kerry, Francis and Francesco for their tenacity in helping build new organising capacity!). Birmingham, Cheshire, Norwich, Ipswich, West of England, and Hastings are beginning to establish their local presence.

Across the network, groups have turned the principle of cooperation into practical action. In Sussex, campaigning helped secure a delay to mayoral elections to avoid a first-past-the-post contest. Brighton's regular coffee mornings have provided a regular space for conversation and connection, while Lewes launched its own series over the summer, including a sold-out October event with Caroline Lucas.



In York, working with local Make Votes Matter activists, members won a motion to support proportional representation at York Council and hosted a screening of Everybody to Kenmure Street with local students.



In Oxfordshire and Devon, stalls have helped make common ground visible across communities, including through an Exeter conference in February with Neal and local activists. And in Stratford-upon-Avon, the launch of a new Belonging Here in August brought an anti-extremism initiative into the local conversation.



These activities may look different from place to place, but they share a purpose: creating spaces where people can meet, find common ground and build the confidence to act together. Local groups are not simply an extension of national campaigning. They are where progressive cooperation becomes tangible, rooted in the politics happening everyday all around the country.

From national conferences and large-scale gatherings to stalls, screenings and coffee mornings, the Compass team and our members are helping connect people

across party boundaries and communities. Our task in the coming year is to deepen these relationships, support emerging groups, build on momentum of this year, and turn shared values into collective action capable of delivering meaningful change at the next general election.

Membership

Peter Dowson (Deputy Director, Operations & Fundraising)

This year we've been determined to harness and build on the relationship between Compass and our members, ensuring that they are very much an influential part of the organisation and the wider political landscape, rather than watching from the sidelines. We have long held the belief that Compass members are political pioneers, with the increasing political fragmentation we're seeing across the political spectrum living proof of that. They have long seen the necessity for collaboration, cooperation and a less adversarial kind of politics, values which will only be more vital in the months and years to come.

As part of setting our three-year strategy up to the next General Election, we gathered Compass members and staff in Birmingham for our first ever membership convention. The day was designed to bring together the perspectives of different members by identifying challenges and opportunities and to eventually agree on the issues and campaigns where Compass should focus its energy. Participants considered what success would look like in 2029 and how Compass can contribute to achieving it through three interconnected areas of work: the state and political parties, the public and civil society.

The day was facilitated and run by Compass member Titus Alexander, using his Network Accelerator process. Through assigned breakout groups, members then introduced themselves to one another and set out their first thoughts on the context and objectives of the day. They then spent some time discussing what the key issues for the three areas of work were, and what success looks like in those areas.



All the groups then came back together to create a live issues map from the priorities each group identified in their discussions using a dot voting method. From there, five priorities were then identified and taken forward into action planning. Members were then able to join a group related to each of these that they wanted to work further on. These subgroups then looked at what success would look like in these areas, and any key milestones. As a result of the day, members were then asked what they will do and what they would like Compass to do before Compass staff closed the convention.

As part of our commitment to holding spaces for our members to discuss both Compass strategy and navigate issues from within the progressive ecosystem, we've also run two other member-only events.

The first of these was one of our regular strategy and campaigns briefings that we hold once a year, which took place on Tuesday, 30th June and ran for roughly two hours. It's crucial that we hold a mix of both online and in-person events so that all members can feed into our work and hear from staff on campaign progress. On the call, we heard from Director Neal Lawson on our involvement with Andy Burnham's campaign in Makerfield and wider Compass strategy, our Campaigns Officer, Clementine on our work towards public ownership of water and proportional representation, and then from Deputy Director, Lena on Better! and our Local Groups work. We then held space for members to feed back on what they heard and ask any questions they had. Over 200 members signed up and we're grateful to everyone who attended.

The second was another online call, this time an extraordinary meeting of Green-aligned Compass members to discuss the party's conference motion to declare "Zionism is Racism", which sparked deep debate, concern and upheaval within the party and beyond. Chaired by Director Neal Lawson, the contents of the call will remain confidential to those who are not Compass members, but as is often the case, the main focus was to hear from different perspectives and ask questions on future prospects for progressive collaboration.

As well as these two special online meetings, we also held our regular member-exclusive events in our bi-monthly #ItsBloodyComplicated podcast calls and our new member welcome calls. These give members the chance to share their thoughts and ask questions of our podcast guests and staff on a wide range of topics, as well as the direction of the organisation. We're so grateful to the hundreds of members who have given up their time this year to make these calls what they are.

In response to our members, we have also held more regular live calls reacting to breaking stories and the most talked about topics of the day. These included reactions to the Gorton and Denton by-election, the Local Election results and the Makerfield by-election. Despite these calls taking place outside of our regular podcast schedule, we still had hundreds of members attend to help drive the conversations and ask the important questions.

Compass has more members than ever and has never been more influential, with a wider reach in the media, within progressive parties and in convening civil society. They are the reason we can do all this work and we are always grateful for all their support.

Communications

Sam Mandi-Ghomi (Media & Communications Officer)

Over the past year, Compass' presence in the media and from a communications perspective feels like it's gone from strength to strength. Since I started in this role in April 2025, last year's 'communications' section of the Annual Report bridged about 6 months of work. Now, I feel a comprehensive grasp of being able to outline it.

With the political events of the past year and Compass' role in it, there has been a definite change from my perspective of the amount of media interest and engagement with the organisation. We made a concerted effort to increase our presence in broadcast media, particularly focusing on Neal as a spokesperson but also providing opportunities for Lena and myself to fill in where appropriate. This certainly resulted in increased presence but also increased trust - developing relationships and ensuring that media outlets know what they can rely on you to comment on is an essential part of this work.

Media

At time of writing we achieved 250 individual media hits between print, online and broadcast. This is up from last year's 192.

In particular, a high number of these came from the institutional capacity to proactively respond to moments of high political sensitivity; Andy Burnham being blocked from standing in the Gorton & Denton by-election, Keir Starmer's resignation, the various by-elections themselves and, of course, Burnham becoming Prime Minister.

Standout amongst these are:

- The Guardian's long-read on our role across the year
- BBC's Westminster Hour reporting from ***Change:NOW!***

Publications

As anticipated, Compass as an organisation have curated a range of longer-form publications over the year to support and develop a range of ideas, both to contribute directly to our campaigning work and also to support the sector-wide effort to bring about the good society.

At time of writing we have released seven publications this year, with an eighth due by the time the year is out. These totalled 1,990 downloads at time of writing, an average of 284 per paper - up from last year's 226.

Lifting the Lid on Britain's Pressure Cooker Politics: How Inequality and Neoliberal Capture Broke First Past the Post by Stuart Donald was the foremost of our campaigns-based publications this year. The spiritual sequel to Stuart's successful The Temper Trap: How Proportional Representation Tames the Populist-Right from last year, it justifies the need for a change to a proportional representation electoral system in Britain due to the disenfranchisement that rising inequality systemically embeds under FPTP.

Three came from a policy base. Care is a Societal Challenge: Purpose Before Process by Bob Rhodes explained the need for a radical new vision for our social care system,

The New Frontier: What is the Future of Progressive Politics in Wales? by Professor Kevin Morgan and Gus Williams presented a wide-ranging analysis and proposition for the future in Welsh politics, and Ending Business As Usual: Policy Options for A Progressive Government presented over 200 pages from progressive policy experts to assist the new Burnham government in fulfilling their pledge to, well, end business as usual.

Three others were ideological and definitional in their work. What is the Soft Left? by Professor Eric Shaw provided a history and a contemporary vision for where Compass politics largely situates itself now, The Progressive Puzzle by Geoff Mulgan defined what it actually means to be 'a progressive' in 2026, and Liberalism Alive: A Liberal Vision for a Flourishing Britain by Roz Savage MP gave a rousing challenge to the country's Liberals to fundamentally re-find their purpose in an age of political polarisation.

Podcast

2026 has been a good year for It's Bloody Complicated, but there is always more to do. We made the decision last year to embark on a plan to do more 'reactive' episodes to big political events alongside our standard recordings. These have been incredibly worthwhile, but we have also seen our listenership stay around a similar level to what it was last year.

At time of writing, we've published 31 episodes in the past year - 10 of which were 'bonus' episodes, and 21 regular recordings. These totalled 29,566 downloads, at an average of 954 an episode. This is up from last year's average of 719 and we will be working to ensure this level is sustained over the next year.

The most downloaded episode of the year came from February, with a bonus episode entitled 'Starmer's Last Stand: What Next for the Labour Party?' featuring Clive Lewis MP, Paula Barker MP, and Mainstream's Kerry Postlewhite and Luke Hurst. It also currently sits 9th in the show's all-time listens.

We also consciously made a decision to feature as many directly political figures as we could before shifting to more cultural figures as the year went on. Some of the guests included Mayor of the West of England Helen Godwin, First Minister of Wales Rhun ap Iorwerth, Green Party Deputy Leader Rachel Millward, Stella Creasy MP, former MP and now MSP Stephen Flynn, Ebony Riddell-Bamber and Maya Wolfe-Robinson from The Guardian's Legacies of Enslavement Programme, and pollster Peter Kellner.

Renewal: A Journal of Social Democracy

Peter Dowson (Deputy Director, Operations & Fundraising)

In Compass' second year of publishing Renewal: A Journal of Social Democracy we supported our four co-editors in producing four of our regular issues as well as a special issue. We're proud to support Renewal as a space for rigorous debate, policy development and fresh thinking about the future of social democracy.

Our first issue of volume 34 examined the changing world of work and Labour's ambition to strengthen workers' rights. Contributions explored the Employment Rights Act, the future of trade unions, industrial democracy and the challenges posed by insecure employment and digital platforms. The issue also considered how Labour could reconcile its commitment to good jobs and reindustrialisation with the changing geography of work and the growth of the digital economy.

The second issue of the year considered the political and social foundations of progressive change. Contributors explored the crisis of solidarity, the importance of rebuilding community and membership-based organisations, and the challenges of devolution and effective local government. The issue asked how social democracy can rebuild trust, strengthen collective action and offer a compelling alternative to populism. It also examined the practical obstacles to delivering progressive change, emphasising that economic policy alone cannot address the deeper questions of belonging, democratic participation and political purpose.

Renewal was also in the news when it produced a special issue alongside the Tribune group of MPs. These essays examined reform of the UK's fiscal framework and tax system, productive investment, household resilience, affordability, regional inequality and democratic ownership. The collection challenged the assumption that growth, fairness and fiscal credibility must be competing objectives, arguing instead for an economic model that rewards work, supports productive businesses, strengthens communities and invests for the long term. It provided a platform for developing and debating the ideas needed to translate Labour's electoral mandate into tangible improvements in people's lives.

The third full issue of the year developed these themes through a focus on connection, solidarity and the social dimensions of politics. Featuring Yuan Yang MP's Rita Hinden Memorial Lecture, the issue explored what comes after neoliberalism and how progressive politics can challenge the concentration of economic and political power. Other contributions examined multiculturalism, childhood, community, sport and the political economy of everyday life. Collectively, they made the case for a social democracy rooted not only in economic reform and effective government, but also in relationships, shared institutions and a richer sense of collective life. The fourth issue will be completed and delivered to subscribers in December of 2026.

We're grateful as ever to the Renewal co-editors, who are all volunteers, and have once again delivered a fantastic volume for our subscribers to enjoy. Under Compass' stewardship, we have more than doubled subscriber numbers and we're excited to see what the next chapter holds for the journal.

Finding Our Place

Reuben Chowdhury-Turner (Operations Officer)

One of the great pleasures of joining Compass has been discovering the different routes people have taken to get here. There is experience of trade union organising, journalism, community work and the arts, alongside people like me who are beginning their working lives in politics. This gives real substance to our belief that everyone has something to bring.

Neal's journey will be familiar to you all: from trade union organising in Bristol to working for Gordon Brown, and now directing Compass. If anyone has found their place, it is surely Neal.

Sam Mandi-Ghomi, our Media and Communications Officer, brings a writer's eye to the politics of everyday life, from football and music to the streets of his city, Wakefield.

Clementine Boucher, our Campaigns Officer, came to Compass after years of acting. Understanding another person's perspective and making an idea come alive are among the most valuable skills in political work also. Clem's route is a reminder that what a movement needs comes from all sorts of places.

October brought three new people to the team. Elin Kingston joined as our Organiser, bringing experience of community work and humanitarian fundraising. Mike Matters, our Senior Digital Communications Lead, previously connected charities with major funders in Australia, helping organisations find the resources to put their ambitions into practice. Emily Procter joined as Coordinator for Mainstream, having previously run Olivia Blake MP's office.

Peter Dowson has become Deputy Director alongside Lena Swedlow, helping guide the team through arrivals and new responsibilities following the biggest 12 months in Compass' history. I have joined as Operations Officer, with plenty to learn and a contribution of my own to make.

For me, having the chance to overlap with Luke Hurst has been particularly valuable. Before Compass, Luke was a UNISON representative in a Manchester hospital, organising around the everyday concerns of his colleagues. Clearly, organising begins with people's working lives and the problems they want to solve together. As someone starting out, I have appreciated being able to draw on his experience while developing my own judgement.

We owe Luke, Frances Foley and Kodi McBride, our former Political Campaigns Organiser, an enormous thank you for everything they have contributed to Compass. Frances's years as Deputy Director helped build the organisation that those of us arriving now have the opportunity to be part of. We benefit from work we were not here to see. All three leave something for their colleagues to build on. We are grateful and wish them well in what comes next.

Working in operations is teaching me to value what makes participation possible. Small things like making it easier for someone to attend an event helps them contribute. Any organisation that wants people to have a voice has to think about what enables them to use it.

The Compass I am getting to know makes room for ambition and the possibility of changing your mind. At the start of any career, that is an encouraging combination.

Thank you to my colleagues for helping me find my feet. Helping others find their place in politics is itself a contribution to the Good Society we are here to build.

Looking Forward

Lena Swedlow (Deputy Director, Politics & Campaigns) & Peter Dowson (Deputy Director, Operations & Fundraising)

At the start of last year's AGM, Neal said: "We are tired of saying 'we told you so'". For years, Compass had been developing and sharing an analysis of British politics that proved, in the most frustrating way, to be right. Starmer's puddle-deep mandate was built on a hyperfactional project defined more by what it opposed than what it believed in. It famously shunned ideology, showed little interest in ideas, and kept much of civil society at arm's length. We warned that it would not last. We warned that a politics without a positive vision, without pluralism, and without the people needed to make change happen would eventually run out of road.

Twelve months on, we find ourselves in a very different place. The challenges have not disappeared, and the future has not become any more certain. But this year, we didn't just tell you so. We showed what we could do.

Since our last AGM, Compass members and supporters have helped secure the repeal of the two-child benefit cap and the introduction of a tourist tax to strengthen local government finances. We helped win a delay to crucial Mayoral elections until the supplementary vote system could be reinstated. We brought nearly 800 progressives together at ***Change:NOW!***, demonstrating the appetite for a different kind of politics. We helped Andy Burnham into power on a platform of electoral reform, cross-party working and an alternative to the failures of the Starmer government. And we made sure that Burnham stuck to his commitment to electoral reform, helping deliver a National Commission on Electoral Reform.

These are not isolated wins. They are signs of what becomes possible when ideas, organisation, relationships, and political opportunity come together. They show that Compass can help shape the political weather, build alliances across the progressive movement, and turn long-standing arguments into tangible change. They also remind us that change does not just happen. It takes persistence, collective effort, and people willing to organise for a better future.

We enter the next year from a position of strength. Compass has the biggest membership, the strongest team, the broadest media presence and the most substantial record of political wins in our history. Our ideas are reaching further, our campaigns are building momentum, and our relationships across the progressive movement are deepening. We have spent years making the case for pluralism, democratic renewal and an economy that works for everyone. Increasingly, these are the questions that will define the next phase of British politics.

But we cannot mistake a breakthrough for a destination. The political moment remains volatile, and the forces of division, hate, reaction and democratic decline are not standing still. They are amassing their war chest. Nor would we assume that a change of leadership, on its own, will deliver the transformation we need. Our task is to help build the political conditions in which a different kind of government can succeed: one with a mandate for change, a programme capable of meeting the scale of the crisis, and a coalition broad enough to deliver it.

Our ambition is nothing less than economic and democratic transformation of the country. We want to help deliver the next progressive parliamentary majority, elected on a mandate for proportional representation and a fundamental change in how our economy works. That means making the case for a politics that shares power, and an economy that invests in people, communities and the essential foundations of a good society. It means moving beyond the politics of managing decline towards a credible,

compelling alternative.

First, we will keep pushing for proportional representation. The case for electoral reform has never been stronger, and the National Commission is an important step forward. But commissions do not change the world by themselves. We must turn this opening into a wider public argument, build the alliances needed to sustain it, and make democratic renewal a defining commitment of the next progressive majority.

Second, we will continue to make pluralism a political reality, not just a principle. Through Mainstream, our local groups, and our relationships across parties and movements, we will help build the habits and infrastructure of cooperation that progressive politics needs. We know that the next progressive majority will not emerge from one party acting alone. It must be built in communities, in civil society and across the political spectrum, long before the next general election.

Third, we will keep building the economic alternative. Our work on water, public ownership and the essentials of a good society will continue, alongside a growing coalition for a different economic settlement. We will take these arguments into a major conference this month with UNISON, intervene in the development of new legislation, publish new thinking on the essentials, and bring more organisations into the fight. We need to show not only what is broken, but what could replace it: an economy that tackles stagnation, confronts inequality, strengthens public services and gives people a meaningful stake in the future.

Across all three areas, our purpose is the same: to turn the desire for change into the power to deliver it.

Our team has changed considerably over the last year. We said goodbye to Luke Hurst, who spent three years driving our organising and helped lead Mainstream through an extraordinary first year. We are hugely proud of and grateful for everything he brought to Compass and wish him well for what comes next. Peter's role has continued to develop as he joined the leadership team, while Sam and Clementine have gone from strength to strength, expanding our media reach, breaking into broadcast and bringing our campaigns to wider audiences.

We have also welcomed three new colleagues. Emily is stepping into Luke's shoes to steer Mainstream, Elin is helping organise and strengthen our local groups, and Mike is building our digital communications. We cannot wait to work with you all over the coming year, and to see what we can achieve together.

The next chapter will be shaped by what we do together. If you are a member, there are more ways than ever to help. Join your local group, take part in a campaign, come to an event, share our work, bring a friend into the conversation, or help us connect with people and organisations who share our ambitions. If you have expertise, relationships or ideas that could strengthen our work, we want to hear from you. And if you have been waiting for the moment when getting involved might really make a difference, this is it.

The road ahead will not be easy or smooth. But we will keep making the case for a better society, organising to make it possible, and building the alliances needed to win it. The past year has shown what Compass can do when we bring our ideas, our people and our political opportunities together.

We have the foundations. We have the momentum. And we have a real opportunity to help change the direction of the country. Onwards.

Treasurer's Report

Mark Cooke (Treasurer)

Compass had an exceptional year financially in 2025-26 with a surplus of over £189,000.

This reflected some substantial one-off donations from individuals which are shown separately. Event income was significant this year, because of our successful ***Change:NOW!*** event.

Other income now includes the income of Renewal: A Journal of Social Democracy which Compass took ownership of during the year, while maintaining its editorial independence. Renewal effectively covers its own costs from subscriptions.

Other income also includes recoveries of costs incurred on behalf of Mainstream Labour which Compass and Open Labour established during the year. Compass has agreed to match Open Labour's contributions to setting up Mainstream Labour, with it becoming financially independent of Compass in the near future (Open Labour's members have since agreed to dissolve the organisation and transfer its remaining funds to Mainstream).

As a result of our increased income we have been able to increase our activities, and employed 8 staff at the end of the year.

The Board considered the level of reserves we should hold in the light of this, and agreed our target reserves level should be increased to £150,000.

At the end of 2025-26 we had reserves of just over £292,000 and the Board has agreed to additional staff recruitment, with a higher level of activity which will draw on these reserves over the next few years, while retaining a prudent level of reserves.

While we are, of course, very appreciative of the generous donations made by our major donors, which have strengthened our financial security, it is still a strategic objective to increase our regular income from our large number of members to a level that covers our core costs. At present this covers about 40% of our total expenditure.

We are very grateful to all of our donors, large and small - thank you if you are one of them. If you aren't - please consider making a small monthly donation!

All large donors are listed separately in this report, to acknowledge their support and to ensure the transparency of Compass' funding.

Income and Expenditure for the years ended 31 March	**2026** £	**2025** £
Member income	498,993	361,032
Event income	15,130	-
Grant income	96,320	111,289
Other income	59,805	816
Total income	**670,248**	**473,137**
Staff costs		
Payroll costs	331,979	289,278
Other staff costs	47,200	60,967
Office costs	35,994	40,954
Activity costs		
Event costs	39,651	23,056
Project costs	-	8,122
Other costs		
Bank Charges	10,374	9,272
Fundraising costs	2,070	13,462
Other costs	13,831	8,747
Total Expenditure	**481,099**	**453,858**
Surplus for year	**189,149**	**19,279**
Movement on General Fund for year	**189,149**	**19,279**

Balance Sheet as at 31 March	**2026** £	**2025** £
Debtors and accrued income	29,205	34,480
Cash	334,491	151,375
Total Assets	**363,696**	**185,855**
Creditors	24,165	15,974
Deferred Income	37,500	56,999
Development Loans	10,000	10,000
Total Liabilities	**71,665**	**82,973**
Net Assets	**292,031**	**102,882**
Representing:		
General Fund	292,031	102,882
Net Assets	**292,031**	**102,882**

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

The amounts shown are cash received during the year.

Funder	Amount	Project
Fiona Mactaggart	£10,000	Core funding
Henry Tinsley	£20,000	Core funding
Marmot Charitable Trust	£25,000	Non-party political research and education (45 degree change)
Pim Piers	£56,000	Core funding
Polden-Puckham Charitable Foundation	£50,000	Non-party political research and education
Ruth Lister	£20,000	Core funding
Sacha Lord	£59,640	Opinion research
Simon Davidmann	£100,000	Core funding

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

Compass

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