



Christmas Newsletter 2022

What a year!

We are heading into Christmas so what better time to take stock of our situation here at Brighton and Hove Compass, to tell our supporters about our recent successes and to give you a heads up or two for next year's plans. Politics in Sussex, and in the country more widely, is starting to hot up, with an election somewhere on the horizon. It could well come sooner than we think.

To recap, we re-launched our local Compass group mid-Covid, as a spur to 'building back better' in the city. We are taking this further now and using this platform to campaign for a progressive majority across Sussex, one that can truly make a positive impact on people's lives. In this we will be playing a key part in Compass UK's just launched '[Win-as-One](#)' campaign. You probably know already but this is an ambitious plan to get power back, and change the shape and distribution of power in this country for good. To win, and enact real long-term change, means mobilising the progressive majority that already exists in the country to deliver a progressive government. It also means boosting support for deeper, more radical change in the form of a fair voting system.

There are at least four things that you can do without even leaving your favourite Christmas chair!

- (i) Share the film, the report, the website, the press coverage, any of the posters you like! Share them with the link to <https://winasone.org.uk/>
- (ii) Write to your MPs. [Here's where to do that](#). After you send the letter to your MP, you'll be prompted to send the letter to others, like councillors, candidates and local parties.

- (iii) Get involved with Compass: [Become a member](#)
- (iv) [Join us, your Local Group](#)

Locally, we got started properly again in May, with a coffee morning designed to let people know what Compass nationally was up to and what a successful local group could achieve. The meeting was at the Friends Meeting House and was addressed by Neal Lawson, Executive Director of Compass and Steve Williams, founder member of South West Surrey Compass <https://www.compassonline.org.uk/the-story-of-south-west-surrey-compass-2/>. Steve is notorious for having been expelled from the Labour Party after campaigning for a progressive alliance but he's now a Green Councillor for Waverley Borough Council <https://modgov.waverley.gov.uk/mgUserInfo.aspx?UID=896> and as proactive as ever. The meeting was inspiring, with pretty much universal agreement from those assembled, that we need to focus our efforts on campaigning during the run up to the next election, trying to catalyse greater cooperation between the parties. At the end of the session, several new people volunteered to join the Steering Group. It may also be helpful to record that we learned we needed to be careful as regards access. Nice as the Friends Meeting House is, we have changed our regular venue to the Cornerstone Community Centre in Hove because it has a lift.

Steering Group for Brighton and Hove Compass

We now have over 700 individuals and organisations in the city signed up to support us and many more in Sussex more widely. We are looking to recruit additional Compass members to our friendly and convivial Steering Group. We also need to redress the current gender imbalance of six men and one woman. Interested? Email us for more details at brightonhove@compassonline.org.uk

Our focus for the moment is on launching other Compass groups in Sussex. We want to work together to demolish the so-called [Sussex Blue Wall](#): the three Sussex constituencies that already have 'progressive majorities' but a Tory MP; and the three further constituencies in which a small swing could deliver a non-Tory majority.

With that start to encourage us, we got some way down the road to planning for a presence at the Lib Dem Conference which was to be held in Brighton on 17th-20th September. This would have been exciting because it would have been a chance to improve our links into the Lib Dem community when, to date, the bulk of our Brighton and Hove activists are mostly Labour and Green (and non-aligned). Connecting with the Lib Dems is something we need to improve on now as we prepare for a defining campaign in Lewes – see more on this below. However, unfortunately, the conference was cancelled at short notice during the mourning period for the Queen and so we all stood down.

In October we kicked off what we hope will be a series of bi-monthly Progressive Politics Coffee Mornings. The intention is to informally discuss and explore local and national issues pertinent to the campaign. The first one was on the theme of *'Working Together Then and Now'* and was a great success. The room at the Cornerstone was full and the biscuits were top notch. Green Councillor Martin Osborne chaired a conversation between Davy Jones, former Green Party candidate and Lloyd Russell-Moyle, Labour MP for Brighton Kemptown. It was a frank, honest and collegiate discussion about the challenges around collaboration between the Greens and Labour, with a look back at the issues that arose in the last three General Elections in Brighton. Both Davy and Lloyd provided valuable historical background and context to the decisions each party took. There was lots from both of them about the pros and cons of parties standing their candidates down with a shared recognition that the Green decision to stand down in many seats in 2017 was a largely unrewarded sacrifice, leaving a difficult legacy which has to be faced next time around. Check the picture below if



you don't believe it. It was a good fun morning, honest.

There was widespread recognition from the floor that ahead of the next election, we need to be creating spaces for cross-party engagement and discussion. While we may not agree on everything, we agree that the long-standing strands of progressive politics, be it social democracy and socialism, liberalism, or green/environmentalism, have far more in common than the stuff that divides us and

that we need to be building relationships of trust. We were also reminded that most progressive voters aren't activists in any of the progressive parties: just people who want to see the end of this dreadful government.

Another important event for us was the stall we ran at the Lewes Labour Party's all-day event in November. This was *'A day of ideas to dismantle the Blue Wall'*. The meeting was open to all and Lewes Town Hall was packed, with a number of active Compass-supporting speakers, including [Clive Lewis MP](#) and former Labour MP and Minister, [John Denham](#).

The day opened with Tim Bale, Professor of Politics at Sheffield and Jonathon Freedland, sometime of the Guardian, both of whom had a lot of nerve to stand up at a Labour Party event and tell those gathered that, despite the massive lead they seemed to have in the polls, the chances of them getting a genuinely transforming majority in the upcoming election were actually quite slim. This was probably not what Labour members expected but is very much in line with Compass analysis that shows that genuine change will require a much more fundamental transformation, one that can only be brought about by a true progressive alliance. Labour has done well in the Stretford and Urmston by-election with a 10 % swing: the point is, however, this is not enough to secure even a majority in Parliament. *This* is the message we have to get out to the public.

Our stall at the Lewes Labour Party event did really well and, as the photo shows, our steering group was overwhelmed with people asking about our ideas and plans and trying to find out what Compass is about. Meeting so many existing and potential members and supporters from across Sussex was very encouraging. During lunch we met people who want to set up a Compass group for the Lewes area. We will be working on this urgently in the immediate new year. Get in touch if you live in the area and are interested to join in



In summary, the ideas and analysis from speakers and audience members was deeply thoughtful and the opposite of the tribal attitudes that so damage progressive politics in the UK. We were also delighted that Clive Lewis MP popped over to admire our lovely new banner: 'for a fair, equal, democratic and sustainable Sussex!'

Sadly, we had to cancel our event planned for 10 December. We were aiming to bring together Compass members from across Sussex to discuss working together to dismantle the Sussex Blue Wall. But we will pursue this agenda in 2023.

And for next year: Dates for the Diary

Saturday January 14th: Progressive Politics Coffee Morning #2. [Cornerstone Community Centre](#), 10.30 am. **Getting PR Done: What, How and When?** The overwhelming support from the membership and unions for PR at the last Labour Party Conference was a huge step forward. In theory it should now be party policy. But we've a long way to go, whilst the members and the unions might want it, but the Labour leadership seem wilfully blind to the support, the logic, and already widespread usage in the UK So what next, how do we get PR done?



We'll be exploring the PR options, what's happening in Labour post-conference, and what we in Compass are doing. We'll be discussing about what we can do nationally and locally, assisted by Jess Garland: Head of Policy and Research Electoral Reform Society, Samuel Kind: Campaigns Organiser, Labour for a New Democracy and Lena Swedlow: Campaign & Projects Officer, Compass

February, no date yet: meeting in Lewes to establish a Lewes-based Compass group.

March 11th: Progressive Politics Coffee Mornings #3. Cornerstone, Brighton. Likely topic: the Green New Deal. What it means, what it can deliver, how it will be achieved.

Saturday 13 May: Progressive Politics Coffee Mornings #4. Future topics are queueing up for bookings. One we may consider, if we can find the right speakers for the day, is Class and Progressive Politics.

Website

Our new website is live and we try to keep it updated. Thanks to Colin Miller who has been handling the tech work. Have a look at <https://www.bhcompass.org.uk/how-to-get-involved/>. There is still work to do but we want the website to be a major tool in the arsenal of the group. It will help us publicize all our events. It will allow people to join the group online and, in time, even pay a subscription. It will be an archive for old news, pictures and the newsletters, and it will let us provide links to important resources. All this and more! Check it out.

May/June, date to be determined: All-day event to explore the long-held assumptions of the progressive political parties. Are they still relevant, do they need to change and if so in what ways? What are the ideas and positions that could help create an exciting, refreshed progressive vision for the UK? We will explore how to re-purpose progressive politics to face a deeply challenging future. How do we change and what do we need to do to create the good society?

Remember, as we sign off for the year, a general election is coming, possibly within a year. Labour is ahead in the polls but the party needs to gain 124 seats just to break even. To repeat, just to get a majority of one, Labour needs a 17-point swing, unprecedented in the modern age. The challenge is that the progressive, or anti-Tory, vote is split. Our campaign is seeking to deliver the swing needed and now we have to develop some real momentum. Hook up with the wider **Win-as-One** campaign and help us spread the word!

Membership

We have some 800 names on our list but not all are paid up members (although many of them have said they wanted to be!) We need to expand this membership. Increasing numbers and money will be what enables us to organise more and better events. We have already begun signing members up and, in time, the website will make a big difference to making this happen. So, roll up, roll up. Just email: brightonhove@compassonline.org.uk. And [join](#) the national campaign. It's inexpensive and the money will go to cover our campaigning costs: leaflets, banners, stickers, coffee, room bookings, etc.

Contacts

Web: bhcompass.org.uk

Email: brightonhove@compassonline.org.uk

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/BrightonHoveCompass>

National Compass: <https://action.compassonline.org.uk>