

SORTITION
F O U N D A T I O N

**Sortition Foundation
Annual Report**

September 2021

www.sortitionfoundation.org

Minutes of the Sortition Foundation

Annual General Meeting

9 September 2021

DATE: Thursday 9 September 2021

TIME: 17:00 - 18:00 (BST; GMT+1:00)

LOCATION: Online

DIRECTORS PRESENT: Peter Cross, Ayesha Garrett, Keith Garrett, Brett Hennig, Sarah Matthews, David Jubb

STAFF PRESENT: Rich Rippin, Hannah Shields, Tom Lord

MEMBERS PRESENT: Nick Gill, David Vickers, Clay Shentrup, Nicholas Coccoma

PROXY MEMBERS: Sonia Randhawa (Richard Rippin), Ben Redhead (Brett Hennig)

APOLOGIES: James Robertson, Robert Lowry

MEETING BEGINS: 5:03pm UK Time

0. Welcome, appoint facilitator: Sarah Matthews

1. Directors' Annual Report (below): Brett Hennig

- What we've done: CAs and campaigns
- New supporter programme
- **Accepted**

2. Statement of Accounts (below): Brett Hennig

- **Accepted**

3. PROPOSAL / [SPECIAL RESOLUTION](#) : Brett Hennig

- That the new [Sortition Foundation Articles of Association](#) be endorsed by the members.
- There was a discussion to clarify some administrative points about the revised articles of association.

- **Accepted (unanimous)**

4. Election of new Director(s) OR N/A

- All directors not appointed at a previous AGM, and one third of the other directors (the longest serving, up to a maximum of 3 years) must stand down at every AGM. Peter Cross, Barnaby Jackson and Philipp Verpoort stand down.
- No nominations to become a director were sought or received (as we were hoping to change our Articles of Association), and therefore the Sortition Foundation Directors for 2020-21 are: Brett Hennig, Steph Riach, Sarah Matthews, David Jubb, Ayesha Garrett, Keith Garrett.

5. Any other business: None

6. Close of meeting: 5:40pm

MEETING ENDS

2020-2021 Directors' Annual Report

The **directors** for the 2020-21 year were Brett Hennig, Steph Riach, Sarah Matthews, Peter Cross, Philipp Verpoort, Ayesha Garrett, Keith Garrett, Barnaby Jackson, and David Jubb.

Current staff of the Sortition Foundation are Brett Hennig, Tom Lord, Hannah Shields, Sam Dyer, Ayesha Garrett, Rich Rippin, Sonia Randhawa and James Robertson.

PROJECTS & ACTIVITIES

Selection and Stratification Services

Although early 2020 was a very quiet time for citizens' assemblies due to the pandemic, after the first wave subsided, and citizens' assemblies moved online, we experienced a surge of activity from September onwards, which has continued. From September 2020 we have been involved in the delivery of approximately 35 citizens' assemblies, including [Scotland's Climate Assembly](#), the [Budapest \(Hungary\) Climate Assembly](#), a [citizens' jury on assisted dying in Jersey](#), the UK government's [Public Advisory Group on COVID-19](#), and many community panels in Australia for councils in Victoria. By June 2021 we had delivered over 400,000 invitations to households inviting people to register for sortition events.

A New Strategic Plan

In 2018 we went through a strategy development process with members and supporters that resulted in this [Sortition Foundation Strategy 2019-2024](#) document, outlining a path towards the institutionalisation of CAs and asking many questions - not least of which was how to fund such a campaign.

Since that time our Selection and Stratification Services have expanded considerably and we have grown rapidly: in 2018 we were completely volunteer run and led; now in 2021 we have several staff and contractors and our substantial financial surplus (from our selection services) is dwarfing our membership dues. Due to our changed circumstances we took the time to refresh our strategy and clarify what we hope to achieve given our increasing resources. Through a participative process and a detailed analysis of the broader movement we identified our organisational values, goals, vision, objectives and purpose to **publicly advocate for real democracy**. For more details please see our new [Strategic Plan](#).

Framing Citizens' Assemblies

Throughout the development of our strategic plan, other organisations told us that they struggle to engage with people and supporters and that for the vast majority of the (British) public, democratic reform is not a salient issue¹, even as many more institutions are experimenting with democratic innovation, a trend referred to by the OECD as the “deliberative wave”. However, even in the countries riding the crest of this wave, vast swathes of the public remain detached from this issue². One explanation for this is that, as Adam Cronkright puts it, “the deliberative democracy field is still talking in ways that are inaccessible, impersonal and unemotional. It doesn’t connect.” If we are to capitalise on the deliberative wave and the opportunities for reform that it presents we have to tell a more compelling story and build broad public support.

As such, in late 2020, we brought together over two dozen organisations³ to embark on a collaborative framing project. The aims of this project are to:

1. Produce new, more compelling ways to talk about democratic reform such as citizens' assemblies;
2. More closely align our messaging across the movement;
3. Build our framing skills and capacity;
4. Produce a central democracy messaging guide - a shared hymn sheet to sign from.

So far the group has been guided through four participatory workshops and:

1. Developed a shared language and set of tools for framing;
2. Shared existing research around the British public's perceptions and ways of thinking about democracy and democratic reform;
3. Developed new ideas for [framing deliberative democracy](#)⁴.

The next stage of the work is to refine and test the ideas generated during the workshops. The purpose of message testing is to evaluate how well messages

¹ An ERS survey of 3014 adults found only 10% of the public consider making the UK more democratic an important issue. In 2019 “lack of faith in politicians/ government” was mentioned by 11% of the public surveyed by IPSOS MORI's issue tracker.

² Scotland has commissioned high profile Citizens Assemblies around the future of Scotland and Climate Change. A Sortition Foundation/ YouGov survey of Scots in November 2020 found that 40% of respondents either didn't know or neither opposed nor supported establishing Citizens Assemblies to scrutinise government proposals and inform parliamentary bills.

³ Organisations involved include: Sortition Foundation, Involve, Dem Soc, ERS, RSA, Compass, Common Weal, Unlock Democracy, Make Votes Matter, Engage Britain, XR, Stratagem, Coproduction Network Wales.

⁴ A coalition within the group has begun to experiment using the framing for a campaign to institutionalise citizens assemblies in Scotland. See the Scotsman article [Revealed: Support for 'House of Citizens' second chamber at Holyrood to keep MSPs in check](#)

“work” (e.g. whether they are accessible, and relatable, how they shift attitudes towards supporting our goals i.e. democratic reform). We have successfully raised £16000 including a £7500 grant from JRRT to fund this research which will begin in September of this year.

Our Campaign work

One of the key opportunities identified through our strategy development was the potential to institutionalise citizens' assemblies in Scotland. In December 2020, we published a collaborative report entitled [A 'House of Citizens' for the Scottish Parliament](#) with Common Weal, Electoral Reform Society and the RSA. This report detailed the value of a House of Citizens to Scotland, alongside answering key questions about its potential function. Following this, we identified the need for additional campaign support and hired Will Stringer in March 2021 to do so. In the first phase of the project we have:

- Over 2000 signatories on [our petition platform with Electoral Reform Society](#);
- [Delivered an impactful video](#) that featured a participant from the citizens' panel in Aberdeenshire. The video generated over 25,000 views across Twitter, Facebook and YouTube;
- With Electoral Reform Society, [we generated extensive press coverage for the campaign](#) in [The National](#), The National on Sunday, The Daily Record, The Morning Star and The Scotsman alongside blog posts on Equality by Lot, ERS and Sortition Foundation websites;
- Produced high-quality advertising and social media content, dramatically increasing visibility of Sortition Foundation across social media platforms. In the month from the campaign launch (May 2021), on Twitter alone this saw an increase in mentions by 305.7%, impressions by 102.9% and profile visits by 52.1%. Our Facebook advertising reached 20,600 people, generating 3799 views on our petition page;
- Contributed to the inclusion of citizens' assemblies within 3 of the main 5 political parties manifestos and to Scotland's governing party, [the Scottish National Party, committing to hold an annual national citizens' assembly](#). The Scottish Greens called for institutionalising citizens' assemblies at a local and national level;

In the next phase of the campaign we aim to

- Engage community and political organisations to improve citizen awareness and engagement with the campaign, e.g., Voices for Scotland and Edinburgh Greens;

- Generate original content with external organisations e.g., blogs, podcasts alongside content for Sortition Foundation and partner websites;
- Continue to develop press coverage of the campaign through key milestones, e.g., 6 months since report publication;
- Launch a “contact your MSP” campaign to generate political engagement;
- Engage MSPs directly about the campaign.

Governance and membership review

Having established our new strategy we then considered how best to structure ourselves and the resources that we have to deliver on our strategy, and to clarify and maximise the impact of staff, directors and members. In order to inform this process we held many discussions between members, staff and co-directors and peer organisations about how we develop our strategy and governance.

We held member discussions on strategy in February and on governance and membership in May. Both member sessions generated valuable feedback which has shaped our thinking in relation to the future of Sortition Foundation strategy, governance and membership. One of the key pieces of feedback from members in both sessions was a desire for the organisation to lead more dynamic change; highlighting a tendency for meetings with members to be too technocratic; looking inwards at the workings of the organisation rather than having outward facing, practical conversations about making change happen.

There have also been multiple meetings with our growing staff team. Three years ago, the Sortition Foundation did not have any paid staff. By the end of 2020/21 the organisation had 8 staff and contractors. The team has done a great job handling the steep rise in workload: both in terms of the rapidly increasing number of citizens' assemblies and the successful campaigning work in Scotland and beyond. It is clear from conversations with staff that there is a desire for greater agency in terms of the way the organisation operates, drawing from the finest traditions of the cooperative movement - which feels inline with the organisation's values. If we are to retain and continue attracting high quality staff then it is clear that we need to adapt our governance structure to empower them more.

We have also had conversations with more than twenty-five organisations in the 'democracy sector' as part of our two research projects. The first project, from September to December 2020, set out to understand the approaches to leading change by different organisations. The research question was, 'How can the Sortition Foundation most usefully apply its own resources to lead change?' The

outcome of this project, along with feedback from members and staff, fed into the creation of the Sortition Foundation's new [Strategic Plan](#) which has a clear focus on publicly advocating for a real democracy. This chimes with Sortition Foundation members' desire to see a more proactive organisation.

The second research project, with peer organisations, took place from May to July 2021. This project investigated existing member, supporter and education programmes in the democracy sector. Again, our ambition was to better understand where the Sortition Foundation can most usefully contribute to change across a movement of organisations and individuals dedicated to democratic reform. The findings of this project, along with feedback from members in our May meeting, have shaped proposals to adapt and improve our activity programmes which connect with the public. We are committed to identifying how the real democracy movement absorbs new people and provides opportunities for them to learn more and take action; and to identify the Sortition Foundation's role within that.

During all of this research and these conversations throughout 2020/21, co-directors of the Sortition Foundation, made up of members and staff of the organisation, have been meeting every two months to consider how the organisation can best deliver its new strategic plan. This has resulted in a proposal to revise the company's governing document to create a more cooperative structure to enable staff to have a greater say in the running of the organisation. The proposed governing document was sent to all staff, members and co-directors in July for feedback. Taking into account everyone's feedback the proposed Articles have now been reviewed by a lawyer to ensure they comply with company law and there was a special resolution (see above) to adopt these new Articles at the Annual General Meeting.

Website redesign

This took longer than expected, but [our new website](#) was launched in September 2020. We think we now have a clear, inspiring, informative and engaging site and hope you do too!

Global Assembly

We are one of the partners helping organise the [Global Assembly](#) due to happen in late 2021. This is perhaps the first real global sortition event where we try to make sure anyone on the planet could have been selected, and bring together a **snapshot of the human family** to discuss how to tackle the climate emergency.

THE YEAR AHEAD

With the development of our Strategic Plan and instigation of regular quarterly reviews we are slowly professionalising our attitudes towards our goals and the ways we try to achieve them. This will of course be an ongoing process! The following opportunities for the coming year are sure to continue:

- Use sortition to recruit participants for many more citizens' assemblies in the UK, Australia, and around the world;
- Continued campaigning to institutionalise citizens' assemblies, especially in Hungary and Scotland;
- Through our framing research, understand better which messages work to build public support for citizens' assemblies and share these across the movement;
- Use the COP26 in Glasgow as a key opportunity to articulate how the climate crisis is a product of our broken democracy;
- Cement our new organisational structure to deliver on our new strategy.

FINANCES

Financially our growth has been very significant - more details are below. This is a result of our selection and stratification service provision increasing dramatically over the last financial year, even during a pandemic, as predicted in our last annual report. Our turnover increased over 3-fold from £83,801 in 2019-2020 to £265,669 in 2020-21.

Thank you for your continued support!

2020-2021 End of Year Financial Report

The statements below, prepared by our accountant, are for the period 1 April 2020 – 31 March 2021. All foreign currency amounts (USD, AUD, EUR, HUF) have been converted to GBP.

A significant proportion of any surplus ("profit") has already been redirected into financing our campaign work; the surplus listed in the statements below is **after we have paid for significant campaign staff and material.**

Sortition Foundation

Company Limited by Guarantee

Income Statement

Year ended 31 March 2021

	2021	2020 <i>(restated)</i>
	£	£
Turnover	251,681	83,801
Other income	<u>14,018</u>	<u>-</u>
	265,699	83,801
Cost of raw materials and consumables	14,020	15,117
Staff costs	125,015	42,433
Depreciation and other amounts written off assets	311	94
Other charges	93,558	11,505
Tax	6,001	1,986
Profit	<u><u>26,794</u></u>	<u><u>12,666</u></u>

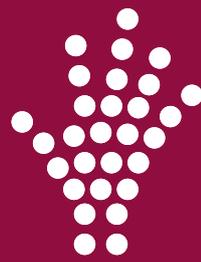
Sortition Foundation

Company Limited by Guarantee

Statement of Financial Position

31 March 2021

	2021	2020
	£	(restated) £
Fixed assets	1,694	47
Current assets	96,228	25,700
Prepayments and accrued income	278	-
	<u>96,506</u>	<u>25,700</u>
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	61,087	2,710
Net current assets	<u>35,419</u>	<u>22,990</u>
Total assets less current liabilities	<u>37,113</u>	<u>23,037</u>
Accruals and deferred income	1,300	14,018
	<u>35,813</u>	<u>9,019</u>
Capital and reserves	<u>35,813</u>	<u>9,019</u>



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