

A victory for democracy

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Labour has, give or take the odd 1,000 or so people who will be barred from voting over the next few weeks, [610,000 people eligible](#) to vote in its leadership election.

In May it had about 200,000 members.

I am not one of the 610,000. But I think all who believe in democracy and in the participative politics on which it is so dependent should celebrate this fact.

Over the last year we have seen the impact of an increase in political participation in Scotland. I welcomed that and for those looking for bias it has to be said that Labour did not enjoy the outcome.

Now I welcome the fact Labour has motivated the same interest amongst the electorate.

As I have also welcomed the huge rise in Green Party membership.

I even had an email from the LibDems yesterday telling me they needed a bigger venue for their conference because of an increase in their membership. For the record, that's good news too.

I will celebrate when the Tories tell us that they too have seen their ranks swell: I am not aware of any such news as yet.

Why do I celebrate this? Because, as I have long argued, democracy belongs to us all. This country belongs to us all. And many, many people fought (sometimes literally) for the right to say that. And just as I value all they did I think we have a duty to ourselves, to them and to each other to engage with the question of what we want our country to be.

Participating in politics is one way to do that. It's not the only way, of course. Advocacy is another, which is what I have done. But without people willing to engage in politics change will not happen. And without a shadow of a doubt we need change and it can

only come from mass participation in UK politics that creates debate, provides funds free from tainted sources, delivers on doorsteps, recruits candidates and puts real people into positions to effect change for those they represent.

Drop all party politics. Drop the silly talk of entryism: the scale of this new membership is far too large for that to be a significant factor. Just celebrate the fact that people have been willing to put their name and a bit of their cash into the democratic process. That is good news for us all.