



SHARON GRAHAM'S MANIFESTO

LET'S GET
BACK TO THE
WORKPLACE



PRIORITY

A Democratic Union built on Shop Stewards and Reps

We will make our Union more democratic and accountable to the workplace and members.

If elected, I will make growing our lay member democracy a critical objective of my leadership. To build our base and power, we are going to need much more engagement, not less. I want to know how our Shop Stewards and Reps can get more involved in decision-making outside of committee meetings and how we can take policies agreed at conferences into the workplace.

Regardless of who has been elected, there is a tendency to centralise decision-making and for fewer and fewer voices to be heard as time passes. This should not be the case. We cannot rely on a few individuals to sort out 'our problems' and make all the decisions.

Therefore, if elected I will set up a Democracy Commission to make concrete proposals on how best to deliver greater democracy and accountability throughout our Union.

Together, we will be a democratic, transparent union. I pledge to increase lay member democracy within our union.

If elected, I will:

Establish and lead a **Democracy Commission**, overseen by the chair of the Executive Council, to deliver concrete proposals for reform including:

- Decide on how we can **increase the role of the Shop Stewards/Reps** within our decision-making, including establishing a Shop Stewards Parliament.
- Examine how digital tools can be used to supplement rather than sidestep our existing policy-making apparatus.
- Investigate the best method for taking **Union Policy into the workplace**.
- Make recommendations to deliver the maximum possible transparency regarding procurement, including prioritising Union firms.



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Ensure that the General Secretary and Senior Officials are accountable to the members.

- Broadcast monthly '**General Secretary Live**': online Q&A with members via video link.
- Hold live online **Q&A after the close of each Executive Council**, available to all Shop Stewards and Reps. Establish '**Conference Live**': online feed of biannual delegate conference, available to all members.
- Conduct regular General Secretary '**Workplace Visits**' covering every Sector and Region, so that the leadership is at the heart of the Union.

Build a new Unite Digital Campaign Team to better interact with members.

- Every form of communication will be reviewed and evaluated, and a practical plan of action put in place. We will establish in-house capability that can truly deliver a modern, forward thinking strategy.

Streamline the bureaucracy, flatten the structure and give more responsibility to industrial officials.

- No more jobs for the boys. We don't need an army of gatekeepers and 'hangers-on'. Review member subscriptions.
- We must ensure greater transparency on the reasons and timing for any increases.

In-depth: Building a democratic Union



Why is increasing 'democracy' within our Union so important?
How can we make sure it happens?

In addition to fundamental change to the operational structures of the Union, I also believe that we need to strengthen our democracy. Power and who holds it are critical political concepts. I want a Union where the elected representatives that are closest to our members hold greater decision-making power, not less. Therefore, if elected I will set up a Democracy Commission that will be led by the General Secretary together with the Chair of the Executive Council, but where lay members will be in control.



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The Commission would look at issues like introducing a Shop Stewards Parliament where appropriate, as our Reps are the cornerstone and key resource of any industrial Union. It is the Reps who provide the direct, democratic link to the mass membership. I want to understand how we can better involve them in the decision-making process and look at what we do in between meetings.

People are not just waiting to be 'led'. If we want our politics to live and breathe as opposed to being the subject of committee minutes, if we want to build a movement rather than just support a leader – we need to grow a progressive consensus within our Shop Steward base. The reality is that if the Shop Stewards at the workplace don't mobilise their members, then the Union outside has got practically no chance.

For me this is where the progressive Left needs to begin again in our Union. We must become a part of our Shop Stewards. We need an industrial Left of the workplace, not one that talks over it, or at it.