



## Why long-term national strategy is mission-critical for British democracy – and why a Parliamentary Committee for the Future is an important step forward.

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Britain is facing a rare window of opportunity to escape the frantic short-termism that has defined our politics for decades. From the cost of living crisis and housing shortages to the NHS's managed decline, our failure to treat society's foundations as long-term considerations has left us lurching from emergency to emergency. National budgets remain myopically focused on GDP, oscillating between austerity and chronic underinvestment. Our security falters amidst ecosystem collapse, climate disruption, and geopolitical upheaval; even as our Prime Minister reflects on the need for a "new foundation of security" that restores confidence in a shared future.

Alongside these, the challenges on Britain's horizon – Earth systems' failures, crises of care, demographic disruptions across age divides – need a profound reorientation in how we govern if we are to avoid deepening the crisis.

Yet something is shifting. Across the political spectrum – politicians, citizens, communities, civil society – a coalition is forming around the simple recognition that Britain needs political leadership, institutional mechanisms and meaningful citizen participation to think and act beyond a single electoral cycle. The public, stranded too long in managed decline, demands better. And there is one idea, among many, gaining momentum: a Parliamentary Committee for the Future.

The case is compelling. A 2024 report by the Liaison Committee – the "super committee" which oversees the select committee system in the House of Commons – concluded bluntly that the government's inability to think long-term has destroyed public confidence in our democracy.

Heywood Fellow Lucy Smith – who is a Director General in the Civil Service – produced a [“National Strategy Playbook”](#), published late last year, which provides a roadmap for long-term system reform across the nation, not merely government. Capability is growing in foresight communities inside government and an intergenerational, [cross-party group of MPs](#) has begun asking: what would it mean for Parliament to act as guardian of the long term?

Citizens' assemblies and other democratic innovations repeatedly demonstrate that ordinary people can think beyond short-term interests when given proper conditions. And communities and [civil society groups](#), including youth organisations, are now converging around calls for meaningful long-term governance, systemic national strategy capacities and intergenerational commitments.

Britain is not alone in this struggle, and countries from around the world – regardless of their size, wealth and political order – are facing similar critical questions. Looking outward offers important inspiration. Finland, New Zealand, Canada, Singapore, South Korea, Spain as well as Scotland and Wales are all looking to govern in decades, rather than years.

Finland incorporated its Committee for the Future into Parliament in 1993. Singapore's Centre for Strategic Futures has built national resilience and agility. South Korea, recognising that polarisation threatens long-term planning, established a Futures Institute to create bipartisan strategies. What these democracies have in common is the deliberate construction of infrastructure to be proactive, strategic, and long-sighted. For some it is this long-term capability that has been foundational to remarkable industrial, economic and societal transformations. Britain now has the chance to join them.

On 17 March, politicians and civil society leaders gathered at the House of Commons to advance concrete proposals – key among them, a Parliamentary Committee for the Future. Proposed by senior backbenchers in the Liaison Committee and endorsed in the National Strategy Playbook, such a body could overcome partisanship, take a systems-wide view, scrutinise government strategy with democratic legitimacy, and provide continuity beyond election cycles. Crucially, it would develop the national conversations needed to repair our democracy.

When done with meaningful citizen participation at its core, long-term thinking is profoundly democratic – and enhances rather than replaces short-term responsiveness. It offers the conditions, builds the capacity and creates the possibilities for better futures for current and future generations. This leaves open the prospect that we leave things better than we find them from here; and is a credible direction to act against the issues and emergencies of now which are no match for our current priorities for governance.

A collectively shaped long-term national strategy now needs to be given life in our political culture, our public institutions and the imagination of our citizens. The diagnoses are

established and plentiful. The ways and means are known. The momentum is building. A Parliamentary Committee for the Future would not just expand national capacity; it would signal that Parliament and the nation is finally stepping towards long-term stewardship.

The question is no longer whether Britain needs to think long-term, but whether we'll see our present historical moment clearly, and seize it to build the institutions and societal capabilities that make it possible.

The 17 March gathering was a pivotal moment. It demonstrated the strength of cross-party support for better long-term thinking and gave a clear signal that a Parliamentary Committee for the Future is in fact feasible, and not a distant dream – it can be achieved within the year.

We will get there as a result of the huge wellspring of mobilised and committed parliamentarians – of all ages and all parties – who are willing to come together and fix Britain's broken intergenerational social contract, particularly for younger generations. But this cannot be a Westminster-only project. Communities, businesses, academics, civil society organisations, and local governments from across the spectrum must help shape what long-term governance looks like in practice – and they are ready to invest time and energy in achieving this vital goal.

The event this month was a key step forward – in sharing insights, challenging assumptions, and joining the effort to build practices equal to the challenges ahead. Britain's future requires nothing less.

*SOIF is part of a growing informal coalition of over twenty civil society organisations advancing this agenda—supporting parliamentarians to take the next steps (from establishing an APPG to mobilising a Parliamentary Committee for the Future), while actively connecting wider, whole-of-society efforts into their work.*

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