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## Independents Day

Flatpack 2021 campaign gives community groups DIY toolkit for taking over local councils



Of all the things to come out of the Covid-19 pandemic, two things have been thrown into stark relief:

1. central government's complete inability to understand and address the specific needs of local communities;
2. the community's ability to come together at a grassroots level, organise, and look after itself in times of need.

The [Flatpack 2021 campaign](#) has been launched to redraw the political map of the UK in response to these issues.



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## How will Covid-activism impact local elections?

With the postponement of many local elections to 2021 due to Covid-19, there is an unprecedented amount of seats up for grabs. At the same time, as the pandemic took hold local groups around the country stepped up and found collaborative ways of solving the problems faced by their communities, often without any help from their councils. In response to this shift the Flatpack 2021 campaign has been launched with a focus turning people power into political impact.

Founded to create ambitious, community-led councils that remove the restrictions created by the bureaucratic structures of the party machine, the Flatpack Democracy campaign provides help and resources to all independent groups who believe that their council should be run "by the community, for the community."

Since 2014, we've seen Flatpack turn from a "handful of disgruntled people in the pub who took over their local town grow into a burgeoning nation-wide movement," Peter Macfadyen explains. With their support, the Flatpack founder and former Mayor of Frome argues we will witness "a new generation of independents winning seats in the upcoming council elections in May 2021."

*"Just last month, we received over 3000 visits to our website. Every day, dozens of young people are emailing and calling us; they've had a taste of getting involved in their communities and want to do something more. I've been doing local politics for a long time – this truly feels like something new."*

– Peter Macfadyen, Flatpack founder and former Mayor of Frome

*"We want to help people reclaim their councils from party politicians and put real people back in control. This is the perfect time; during the Covid-19 crisis communities have come together like never before, forming mutual-aid networks to support themselves. Many of these community groups have found their local council difficult to work with, and are now asking 'why not run it ourselves?'"*

– Lollie Melton, organiser, Flatpack 2021



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## The birth of Flatpack Democracy

The Flatpack Democracy movement started in Frome, Somerset, in 2011 when a group of residents, frustrated with political squabbling and vested interests, launched a successful campaign to take over their local council. For the last decade, Independents for Frome has successfully run the town council exclusively for the benefit of the local community, launching and delivering a string of initiatives aimed at accelerating the social, ecological and political regeneration of the local area. In 2015, Frome was named Council of the Year.



Councillors in Frome taking matters into their own hands and fixing broken paving.

The movement was further boosted by publication in 2014 of the book Flatpack Democracy, and today around 50 towns and parishes from the South-West to the North of England are now run by groups of independents working together for the benefit of their communities.



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*"I wrote Flatpack Democracy so that the residents of any town, parish or district could come together and use the book as a guide to take over their council. I firmly believe that we have a dysfunctional political system. Many politicians are making decisions to meet their own needs or those of their party, not the needs of the people they serve. We need to build democracy from the bottom up and my book provides a simple guide as to how to do it."*

– Peter Macfadyen, author of Flatpack Democracy and former Mayor of Frome

As the pandemic took hold, local groups around the country stepped up and found collaborative ways of solving the problems faced by their communities, often without any help from their councils. Being there on the ground meant that such groups were able to rapidly identify the needs of local people and address them quickly and effectively, whereas the commitment to observing party-politics often made responding to the fast-moving situation a slower and more cumbersome process for party-controlled local councils.

With the postponement of many local elections to 2021, many community groups and individuals are recognising an opportunity to free themselves from the inefficiency, incompetence and ideology associated with national party politics, and are putting themselves forward for election as groups of independents. They have asked: 'Why do we need party politicians to tell us what we need, when we know already?' and realised that they have the will and resources to provide it themselves.

Historically, many individuals standing for election as independents have found it difficult to gain traction with the electorate, and those that are successful find it difficult to avoid falling prey to council infighting among the disparate group. Built on the principle of groups working together, the Flatpack model avoids this – both boosting the electability of the individual through the group organisation, and ensuring the elected group adopts a transparent way of working that acknowledges and accounts for individual differences.



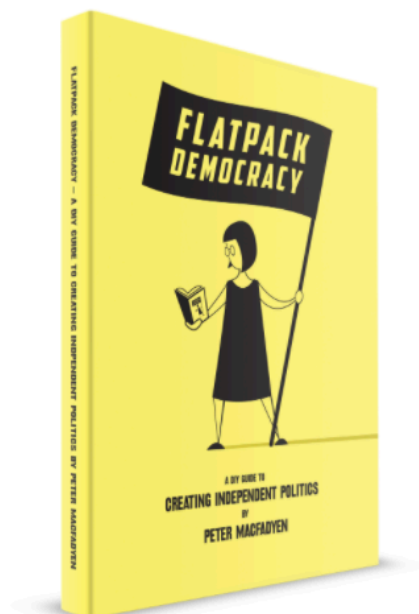
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## The revolution starts here

Do you feel your local council has let you down? Would you like to see local people, creating an effective ambitious council that works with you to do what's best for your community?

For anyone who can answer 'yes' to the above, the Flatpack 2021 website offers an online self-test to establish whether they have a route to taking back control at the local level, and shares how Flatpack 2021 can help them do so.

As Peter Macfadyen says, 'There's really nothing to stop you getting organised and taking over the council where you live. So why not do it?'



Highlighting his unconventional approach to politics with humour, author of Flatpack Democracy and former Mayor of Frome Peter Macfadyen, wears a ceremonial chain made out of vegetables.



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## Notes to editors

To arrange an interview with Flatpack Democracy author Peter Macfadyen or a representative of the Flatpack 2021 campaign, please contact [emily@zetteler.co.uk](mailto:emily@zetteler.co.uk).

### **About Flatpack Democracy**

Flatpack Democracy is a DIY method for communities to win back their council as non-party candidates, pioneered by multiple towns around the UK.

### **About Flatpack Democracy 2021 campaign**

The Flatpack Democracy campaign supports people to reclaim local politics from the systems and political parties that are currently failing them. The campaign will support communities to take back power by winning local elections, of which there are thousands in May 2021. The campaigners will support and work with groups who want to stand for election and, once elected, collaborate to make their parish, town or district councils ambitious, effective and responsive to their local community's needs.

### **About Peter Macfadyen**

Peter has worked in areas of social justice for over 40 years. In 2010 this took him into local politics, co-creating a new relationship between local government and the people, as a councillor in Frome. Central to this is a belief that we need to move from a politics based on fear and confrontation to one of listening, empathy and co-operation, views that he shares through writing and campaigning. His work and lifestyle see humankind as a small part of the wider ecology with a constant focus on the climate emergency. Recycling, reusing, organic growing, cooking, bicycling, community and family are all central.

### **Flatpack Democracy books**

The books Flatpack Democracy (2014) and its sequel Flatpack Democracy 2.0 (2019) are available via [flatpackdemocracy.co.uk](http://flatpackdemocracy.co.uk).

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