

“disgusted of Tunbridge Wells”

how and why to write a letter to the editor

What is a letter to the editor?

Letter + Add to myFT

A UK constitution by the people, for the people

From Alexandra Runswick, London, UK

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In his article “Brexit tests the British constitution” (Opinion, FT.com, April 1), David Allen Green argues that the purpose of a constitution is to “identify where there may be tensions between the elements of the state — for example, between the executive and parliament or the courts”. This is fine as far as it goes but like the current British constitution the article leaves out the

Letters

Democracy undermined on all sides as Brexit starts to take shape

Alexandra Runswick of Unlock Democracy on the abuse of statutory instruments; **Paul Lally** on the politically incoherent EU; **Fawzi Ibrahim** on the end of the phoney phase of negotiations; **Roderick MacFarquhar** on the absent text of the Brexit agreement; **Bob Nicholson** on the missing impact assessments; **Louis Blom-Cooper** on a second referendum

Letters

Tue 12 Dec 2017 19.44 GMT

Just who is it taking back control exactly?

Article 50 has been triggered by the prime minister (Report, 30 March), and the government will now publish its plan for the great repeal bill. While all eyes may be on article 50 and the start of the Brexit negotiations, those of us concerned with the health of our democracy must not let this important piece of legislation slip by; in the proposals lie insidious delegated powers for ministers that could lead to our laws and regulations being rewritten behind closed doors - something those parliamentarians keen to be rid of EU red tape will no doubt be happy with.

While the government has framed these measures as a necessary practicality, it has had consistent form on making major policy changes using this instrument, including: adding the “rape clause” for tax credits claimants; abolishing maintenance grants; allowing

fracking in national parks; and changing voter registration rules.

The PM has given the illusion that she is prioritising an inclusive Brexit involving public engagement. She has promised she will speak for “young and old, rich and poor, city town and country, and all the villages and hamlets in between”. These niceties aside, she has yet to make any concrete commitments for the preservation of the laws that are broadly popular with UK citizens. What will happen to our clean air standards? Will Brexit herald chlorine chickens in our kitchens or sewage on our beaches?

The great repeal bill solely concerns domestic matters, and it would therefore be unjustified for the government to hide behind the excuse that providing too many details would harm the national interest. The public were given a binary option in the referendum, and the resulting message was “take back control”. But who is really taking back control - the people or the government?

Alexandra Runswick
Director, Unlock Democracy

How does this help our advocacy?

- LTEs **are** advocacy
- MPs pay a lot of attention to their local paper and often write articles for them
- They reach people who don't pay attention to international development
- Media help shape political narratives

Finding a good hook for your letter

Health: “I sympathise with your reader who waited two days to see his GP. For many people with TB in India, there is no GP and no drugs.”

A personal anecdote: “Over the last few months my baby daughter has been vaccinated against virtually all the childhood illnesses that plagued my own childhood.”

A calendar date: “Tomorrow - World AIDS Day - gives us the opportunity to reflect on the impact this disease is having around the world.”

Tell a good story

Stories are about people: not just numbers or statistics

Stories speak the audience's language: plain and straightforward language is always best.

Stories don't tell, they show: they paint a picture of the challenges a child faces in accessing the proper nutrition, healthcare or education

Stories stir up emotions: they help us feel connected to someone that would otherwise be distant from our daily life.



Be **EPIC**

Engage - start strong with a dramatic fact or short statement

Problem - explain what the problem is and how it links to something they care about

Inform - give a solution and examples of where this has worked

Call to action - give the reader a specific action to take

www.localnewsmap.co.uk

Every publication has an address for submitting LTEs. You can look up the details for your local newspaper on this website.

Key takeaways



- Don't overthink it - get writing!
- Keep it short - around 200 words
- Be yourself - why do you care about this?
- Tell a story
- Use humour
- Share it on social media