

[Home](#)

[TV](#)

[Radio](#)

[Talk](#)

[Where I Live](#)

[A-Z Index](#)

[Search](#)

UK version International version | [About the versions](#)

[Low graphics](#) | [Accessibility help](#)



[WATCH LIVE](#) BBC News 24

News services
Your news when you want it



- [News Front Page](#)
- [World](#)
- [UK](#)
- [England](#)
- [Northern Ireland](#)
- [Scotland](#)
- [Wales](#)
- [Business](#)
- [Politics](#)
- [Health](#)
- [Education](#)
- [Science/Nature](#)
- [Technology](#)
- [Entertainment](#)
- [Also in the news](#)

[Video and Audio](#)

[Have Your Say Magazine](#)
[In Pictures](#)

[Country Profiles](#)
[Special Reports](#)

- RELATED BBC SITES**
- [SPORT](#)
 - [WEATHER](#)
 - [CBBC NEWSROUND](#)
 - [ON THIS DAY](#)
 - [EDITORS' BLOG](#)

Last Updated: Thursday, 6 September 2007, 11:37 GMT 12:37 UK

[E-mail this to a friend](#)

[Printable version](#)

Brown defends new citizen juries

Gordon Brown has denied his "citizens' juries" are simply a glorified photo opportunity, as the first one meets in Bristol to discuss children's issues.



Mr Brown says he wants to engage more people in politics.

The prime minister said he had already changed his mind on casinos and cannabis after listening to the public.

He says the juries signal a "new type of politics" and will shape policies.

Meanwhile the Lib Dems have put forward plans for people chosen at random to help draft a written constitution, to try to reverse voter alienation.

The first citizens' jury - a group of 12 to 20 people, picked independently to represent a community - is discussing issues affecting children like school discipline and internet pornography. Another meets next week to discuss crime.

Involve parents

They will be given facts and figures and will hear from a range of experts before reaching a conclusion, which will later be presented to ministers.

The Bristol jury is comprised of two tables of parents, two tables of pupils, one of teachers and a random selection of residents.

“ These are all matters that parents, every parent in the country has strong views about and we've got to listen to what they say ”

Gordon Brown

Asked whether they were just a photo opportunity, Mr Brown told the BBC: "No, because we're changing our mind when we hear what people have to say.

"We changed our mind on casinos, we've changed our mind on cannabis; it was a result of me going around the country, listening to people, hearing what people had to say."

He said he expected proposals on school discipline and the curriculum, video internet violence, pornography, poor diets and obesity to come forward.

HAVE YOUR SAY

“ I thought our local MPs and councillors were our spokes-people? ”

David Robinson, Leeds

[Send us your comments](#)

"These are all matters that parents, every parent in the country has strong views about and we've got to listen to what they say," he said.

'Complete farce'

Children's secretary Ed Balls told BBC Radio 4's Today

VOTE

Can citizens' juries help produce better policies?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

[Vote!](#)

Results are indicative and may not reflect public opinion

SEE ALSO

[Views sought on children's lives](#)

06 Sep 07 | [Education](#)

[Mercer and Bercow to advise Brown](#)

03 Sep 07 | [Politics](#)

[When will Brown call an election?](#)

02 Aug 07 | [Politics](#)

RELATED INTERNET LINKS

[Downing Street](#)

The BBC is not responsible for the content of external internet sites

TOP POLITICS STORIES

[Cameron proposes citizen service](#)

[Farm subsidy failures condemned](#)

[MPs push Brown for EU treaty vote](#)

[RSS](#) | [News feeds](#)

MOST POPULAR STORIES NOW

[MOST E-MAILED](#)

[MOST READ](#)

[Police quiz Madeleine's mother](#)

[Daft burglar writes name on wall](#)

[Thousands gather for Rhys funeral](#)

[UK jets 'chase Russian bombers'](#)

[In pictures: Rhys Jones funeral](#)

[Most popular now, in detail](#)

programme: "We need to involve parents more - particularly fathers more."

But shadow work and pensions secretary Chris Grayling accused the government of "always launching public consultations" adding "neither Gordon Brown nor any other minister ever pays any attention to what the public thinks".

He said: "There's a real danger that this whole exercise will be a complete farce."

Meanwhile the Liberal Democrat leader Sir Menzies Campbell has said British politics is in crisis, with voter numbers in decline, and a "real sense of grievance"

“ What we've got to ensure is it's not politicians talking to academics talking to politicians ”

Sir Menzies Campbell
Liberal Democrats

about decisions being taken on which they feel they have no influence.

He is proposing that people should be drawn by random lot to join a convention working on Britain's first written constitution, to prevent it being taken over by constitutional reform "obsessives".

He told the BBC: "What we've got to ensure is it's not politicians talking to academics talking to politicians.

"If we're going to engage the public the public have got to feel that they've had a real stake in the creation of a constitution fit for this century."

He said consultations took place "almost on a weekly basis" but were often "simply disregarded once the decisions were made".

 [E-mail this to a friend](#)

 [Printable version](#)

Bookmark with: [What are these?](#)

[Delicious](#) [Digg](#) [reddit](#) [Facebook](#) [StumbleUpon](#)

FEATURES, VIEWS, ANALYSIS



In pictures
Emotional scenes as the funeral of Rhys Jones is held



Mind games
Nicole backs them, but are brain exercise regimes any good?



In pictures
The life and career of acclaimed tenor Luciano Pavarotti

PRODUCTS & SERVICES

[E-mail news](#)

[Mobiles](#)

[Alerts](#)

[News feeds](#)

[Interactive TV](#)

[Podcasts](#)

MMVII

Most Popular Now | The most read story in Europe is: Police quiz Madeleine's mother

[Back to top](#) ^^

[Help](#) | [Privacy and cookies policy](#) | [News sources](#) | [About the BBC](#) | [Contact us](#)