

4 November 2004

Hastings lad wins national competition to help change the face of British politics

Hastings resident and local Youth Council leader Phil Carey, 21, today won the place to sit on the POWER Inquiry, a new Commission looking at the state of British democracy.

Phil beat hundreds of applicants from across Britain to sit on the Commission chaired by Helena Kennedy QC and launched by the Joseph Rowntree Trusts to mark their centenary.

Inquiry Director Pam Giddy said, 'We are delighted to have Phil on board. There was some very strong competition, but Phil's creative ideas about engaging young people and making politics more relevant won the day.'

On winning his place on the Commission Phil said, 'I am really looking forward to the challenge of being on the POWER Inquiry and I hope my involvement will help more young people take an interest in politics.'

Friday (5 November) sees the first meeting of POWER, an independent inquiry to look at the state of British Democracy. The POWER Commission, chaired by Helena Kennedy QC, will meet over the next year to consider evidence generated through an ambitious programme of public engagement events, and an extensive research programme.

Unlike the usual mix of retired politicians and civil servants who sit on public inquiries, POWER has brought together an eclectic mix of commissioners – including a former head of Margaret Thatcher's Policy Unit, a Radio 1 DJ and the Chairman of the Women's Institute – to look at how citizens can secure a real say in the political decisions that affect our lives. (See below for full list of Commissioners.)

On the launch of the Commission, Chair Helena Kennedy QC said:

'It is time to face the fact that low participation in formal politics is now a serious problem threatening to undermine our democracy.'

She continues:

'The issue is not just voter turnout, as bad as that is, the political parties have been haemorrhaging members since the 1960s and polls show that people feel they have little or no influence over politicians once they are elected. When a government presides over two of the lowest general election turnouts and the two biggest street demonstrations since 1945, it's time to start asking and answering hard questions about why politics is failing to engage with the people of Britain through the traditional channels.'

Inquiry Director Pam Giddy adds:

'We know that people are passionate about the issues politics seeks to address. They are, however, becoming increasingly cynical about the political structures through which they can influence decisions made in their name.

The **POWER** Inquiry will, over this coming year, facilitate a debate across the country to discover the causes of our disillusionment and to examine new approaches to political participation. The inquiry will initiate its own programme of public engagement events, in order to involve as many different communities and individuals as possible. This public evidence will form a crucial part of the deliberations the Commission will undertake.'

Notes to editors

1. **POWER** is an independent project launched by the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust and the Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust Limited to mark their centenary.
2. The **POWER** Commission is a group of people drawn from a range of backgrounds and experience. They include representatives of the left, right and centre of politics, but are mostly people with no particular political party affiliation. The Commission will consider the evidence generated by the Inquiry, from which they will produce a set of recommendations for the future of British Democracy.

Commissioners

Helena Kennedy (Chair)
Ferdinand Mount (Vice Chair) – Author & Journalist
Emma B – Radio 1 DJ
Paul Boakye – Editor, Drum Magazine
Phil Carey – Coach, 'Sport 4 U' project, Hastings
Philip Dodd – Director, Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA)
Barbara Gill – Chairman, National Federation of Women's Institutes
Bano Murtuja – Blackburn-based researcher & community activist
Frances O'Grady – Deputy General Secretary, TUC

3. Phil Carey, 21 – **POWER**'s youngest commissioner – gained a place on the Commission by entering our competition to find a Commissioner aged 18-25. Entrants were asked to submit ideas for the one new thing the Prime Minister could do for young people on a Post-it® Note. For further details about the competition and a selection of entries visit www.powerinquiry.org.

4. Phil Carey: Biographical note

Phil Carey is a Sports Coach on the Sport 4 U project in his home town of Hastings. Sport 4 U is a unique project, taking sport onto the streets for young people – sports halls are replaced by supermarket car parks and other unused urban spaces.

Phil is 21 and gained a place on the Commission by responding to our nationwide appeal. His initiative and passion in working with and empowering young people was extremely impressive. Central to Phil's work is the use of sport, music and art in creative ways to find untapped potential and open up new avenues for young people.

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Phil is a Trustee of the UK Youth Parliament (2003-) and member of Hastings Young Persons Council (former Chair: 2001-2002; 2003-2004).

He has received numerous awards for his work – receiving the Local Hero award for Sussex in the Southern FM Award. He also became a fellow of the RSA in September 2003.

Educated at William Parker School and Bexhill College in Hastings, he went on to study Sports Science at Brighton University. Phil is keen athlete – competing in the triple jump at national level. DJing, music and film are among his other interests.

5. Phil Carey's Post-it® Note entry

What one new thing can the Prime Minister do for young people?

Open youth led community centres in every area, town and city in the country. These youth centres would have under 18s night club, sports facilities, youth radio station, recording studio, internet cafe, food, social games, run DJin Mcin' and breakdancin' workshops and much much more. Young people need the opportunity to express themselves, perform, and need to learn new things to experience life to the max. This would act as a process to engage millions of young people to get them off the street and to find them something they really enjoy and can perhaps make a career out of. This idea has sooooo much potential and I have so many ideas of how to improve it and make it better, etc.

6. **POWER** will conduct a series of Commission hearings supported by a major research programme and public events to find out how political participation in Britain can be increased and deepened. It will publish a final report in early 2006.
7. For further information, please contact **POWER** (0845 345 5307), or Jonathan Edwards (07974 729491).
8. For further details visit www.powerinquiry.org.

Spokespeople available for interview:

- Phil Carey – Commissioner
- Baroness Helena Kennedy QC – Chair
- Pam Giddy – Inquiry Director