

# Climate Assemblies and Juries

**A people powered response to the climate emergency**

**A guide for local authorities and other bodies.**

*This guide aims to support local authorities and other bodies thinking of commissioning a citizens' assembly or jury. It considers how such processes might address the climate emergency, what is involved and approaches to design and delivery.*



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Lancaster and district Climate Change People's Jury  
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## /// Acknowledgements

Written by **Peter Bryant** (Shared Future) and **Lucy Stone** (Our Common Climate).

This work was funded through the Place-based Climate Action Network (PCAN) <https://pcancities.org.uk> an ESRC-supported Network that brings together the research community and decision-makers in the public, private and third sectors.

A huge thank you to **Martin King** for conducting the case study interviews and to the following for their knowledge, insight and valuable time, **Jez Hall** (Shared Future CIC), **Graham Smith** (University of Westminster), **Tim Hughes** and **Suzannah Lansdell** (Involve), **Rebecca Willis** (Lancaster University) and also **Andy Paice** (Mutual Gain) and **Rob Francis** (Traverse).

Our Common Climate is providing support and advise to communities and organisations wanting to develop collaborative, collective approaches to climate change at a local level. [www.ourcommonclimate.org](http://www.ourcommonclimate.org)

More than anyone though, we want to recognise the work of the participants of the climate assemblies and juries that we look at in this report. Their enthusiasm, vision, collective intelligence, patience and humour are a constant inspiration to us all.

### About Shared Future

We are a community interest company established in 2009, working across the UK. Our mission is to move those we engage with towards greater individual and collective authority and autonomy, by supporting their ability to act wisely, confidently and in community with others.

[www.sharedfuturecic.org.uk](http://www.sharedfuturecic.org.uk)



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# Introduction

**T**here has been a flourishing of citizens' assemblies on climate change in the UK, with many local authorities commissioning local assemblies and juries, often as a follow up to declaring a 'climate emergency'. Nationally, a citizens' assembly on climate change commissioned by parliamentary select committees has completed its final deliberative weekend and will publish its report in September 2020. At the same time in France, President Macron commissioned a citizens' assembly on climate change with formal power to shape policy.

Since the coronavirus pandemic took hold some of these assemblies, including the national climate assemblies in the UK and France shifted online to conclude their work. While some of the plans for citizens' assemblies by local authorities are delayed because of the pandemic, some authorities are considering whether to resume in the near future, or are already gearing up.

Having had to deal with the coronavirus pandemic in 2020 and its knock-on economic and social effects, dealing with the even greater climate crisis will be even harder for local authorities. With constrained budget and greater demands on their services, local authorities will need innovative and impactful processes that support their ability to manage the climate crisis. This guidance aims to explore what these 'mini publics' (as citizens' assemblies and juries are often known) offer for local authorities, what have we learned from those climate mini publics so far and how can we help ensure they deliver the intended results.

When done well commissioning a citizens' assembly or jury can be truly transformative for the commissioning body, the participants, and for the wider public. Depending on how they are designed and commissioned, mini publics can be a tool for creating public dialogue. Be used for identifying nuanced public opinion on a topic. They are useful for building consensus, for producing a set of prioritised recommendations or creating space for public engagement within policy making. They can create a robust mandate for politicians to take action. They can improve trust between citizen and government, produce better and fairer policies and act as a catalyst for better partnership working amongst the range of organisations that may have a role to play in addressing the climate emergency.

They require financial and time commitments on the part of commissioners, as well as a commitment to meaningful follow-up to ensure value for money and impact.

This guidance, funded through the Place-based Climate Action Network (PCAN), aims to help local authorities that are exploring the use of citizens' assemblies/juries on climate policy.

**The first part of this guide summarises why you might commission a climate mini public and what they might achieve. The second part will explore what is involved, and how to design a quality process that leads to impact.**

Newham Citizens' Assembly on Climate Change  
Image © Mutual Gain



Typically assemblies and juries bring together between 20 and 150 members of the public to deliberate for over twenty five hours. The members are randomly selected to a profile that reflects the diversity of the population the process is serving. After sharing ideas and opinions with each other and hearing from a range of outside speakers, the participants write a set of recommendations. Parallel to the jury or assembly a diverse panel of key stakeholders meets to check the process is balanced and unbiased. All citizens are paid for their involvement.

# /// Part One

## HOW DOES A CITIZEN ASSEMBLY OR JURY ADDRESS THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY?



Leeds Climate Change Citizens' Jury  
Image © Shared Future

**T**o date, climate policy in the UK has largely been developed and implemented with either no or very little public engagement. Most of the emission reductions that have happened so far have been a result of changes in the energy market as the price of renewable energy has plummeted, and when government incentives were in place. This has had relatively little financial impact on the public, beyond those who purchased rooftop solar panels and benefitted from the income they bring through now discontinued feed in tariff schemes.

At a local authority level, there are now urgent changes that need to be made if we are to stay within the 1.5 degrees of global heating that scientists insist we should. This includes changes in land use, housing and building developments, transport modes, planning decisions, development of onshore wind and other renewable energy sources and waste. The largest proportion of greenhouse gas emissions come from travel, heating, food and consumption. Addressing these at the scale and pace required to meet the climate crisis will require significant changes in everyday life for the UK public.

These changes that will be either in direct control of a local authority, or facilitated and in partnership with a local authority, will require a very high level of public engagement. This includes public understanding of and support for the changes that will need to take place as well as participation and adoption of those changes. As we transition to net zero, local authorities will need ways to ensure the citizens within their constituency are part of this journey, otherwise there is a risk the changes in behaviour and infrastructure will be resisted or poorly designed.

Evidence suggests that while policymakers may be aware of the levels of public concern, they do not have a good understanding of the public support on specific climate policies (Willis 2018).<sup>1</sup> Deliberation, through processes such as a citizens' assembly or jury, can create greater public support, political mandate and momentum for change amongst the wider public.

Citizens' assemblies and juries in this context can be a tool for ensuring public legitimacy of climate policy. If policies are to have a direct effect

on people, it is vital that people are enabled to shape their design and implementation. Enabling a wide range of viewpoints, beyond those already highly engaged with the climate emergency, will mean climate policies are more likely to be fair; as they have been informed and based on recommendations made by fellow citizens, they are also more likely to be publicly acceptable and perceived to be fair. As academic research has shown us: "it is now well established that communication strategies based on 'one way' message-oriented communication tend to be ineffective at fostering significant and sustained behavioural engagement".<sup>2</sup> Citizens' assemblies and juries are a way of fostering a 'two-way' conversation – involving citizens in the decision-making process.

Local authorities can only go so far in reducing the climate impacts within their locality through their own actions – they require partnerships and collaboration with local businesses, institutions and of course the citizens. Deliberative processes, like citizen assemblies or juries, can shift the burden of responsibility to a shared endeavour. They can foster a sense of partnership and collaborative relationship between citizens, and with different stakeholder interests, between which a public authority may need to find a balanced position. The climate crisis is of such magnitude that the only way we will navigate the transition to a cleaner, more sustainable society, is by sharing responsibility, by dialogue and through co-design.

Citizens' assemblies or juries can help local authorities grappling with the climate crisis by; creating informed public dialogue on a highly challenging complex issue, identifying public opinion with more nuance and depth than typical polling or survey methods allow, and potentially they build consensus and create space for co-design in policy making.

### What are citizens' assemblies and juries?

A citizens' assembly or jury are one type of 'deliberative democracy' method or 'mini public'. They aim to involve citizens in democratic decision-making processes. Deliberative democracy methods, such as through a citizens' assembly and jury, sit between traditional representative democracy, where citizens elect a representative to make decisions on their behalf, and direct democracy, where citizens are making decisions directly.

The process brings together a randomly selected sample of citizens that reflects the diversity of the local population. Led by independent facilitators, the citizens are given evidence by a range of speakers (experts, advocates and those with lived experience) and the support to deliberate in order to produce a set of recommendations. Juries and assemblies use the same methodology and only



Lancaster and district Climate Change People's Jury  
Image © Shared Future

differ in their size; juries are typically 20-40 strong and assemblies have 40-150 or more members.

### Examples of other kinds of deliberative processes on climate change

Assemblies and Juries are typically thirty hours or more and follow a highly structured and proven methodology. Examples do exist of shorter processes of public deliberation in response to the climate emergency. They include the one-day Climate Change summits organised by Richmond Council in London<sup>3</sup> and Newham's Climate Now! Open Forum.<sup>4</sup> A process organised by Wolverhampton Council lasted twelve and a half hours, at which 16 people were asked to develop a set of principles for how the council should add address climate change. In Ireland a series of one day Regional Gatherings were organised as part of the government's National Dialogue on Climate Action.<sup>5</sup> How feasible it is to achieve quality deliberation in such a short length of time is explored in more detail in this guide.

Some authorities have recognised that it may be desirable to convene processes that target specific communities whose voices are less often heard. For example, young people, who through school strikes have often led recent campaigns for climate change action. After Newham Council



Camden Climate Assembly  
Image © London Borough of Camden Climate Assembly

declared a climate emergency it issued an open invitation<sup>6</sup> to youth clubs and schools to attend a Youth Climate Assembly.<sup>7</sup> Over 100 young people aged between 11 and 18, worked on small tables to firstly discuss and answer three questions and secondly to write their demands. These were then taken to the council's cabinet meeting which took place immediately after the 90 minute event. The information was well received by politicians and officers. However it is unclear what impact it has had on policy making.<sup>8</sup>

Using the Deliberative Polling method, the Europolis initiative in 2009 worked with a random sample of 400 citizens from all 27 EU member states who gathered

for a long weekend in the run up to the European elections, to discuss (using twenty two languages) the two topics of climate change and immigration.<sup>9</sup> In keeping with the methodology participants completed a lengthy questionnaire both before the process and at the end after hearing from a range of speakers and then engaging in a period of deliberation.

In Canada the Citizens Panel on Edmonton's energy and climate challenges which in 2012 brought 56 local residents together for six days and whose recommendations were subsequently incorporated into the city's energy transition strategy in 2015.<sup>10</sup>

In the US a series of 3 day Rural Climate Dialogues<sup>11</sup> fed into a Rural Climate State Convening.<sup>12</sup> Also of interest is the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People's 'Our communities, our power: Advancing resistance and resilience in climate change adaptation: Action Toolkit (2019).<sup>13</sup>

Finally, in 2016 in Gdansk, Poland the 60 strong citizens assembly on flood mitigation met knowing that any recommendation with over 80% support from the assembly membership would automatically be implemented by the city authority.<sup>14</sup> A similar commitment has been made in the Polish city of Wroclaw for its citizens panel on transport in 2020.<sup>15</sup>

## Local authority climate assemblies – who has done what so far?

As a direct result of the local declaration of a climate emergency many local authorities started organising local climate assemblies and juries in 2019 and early 2020. The following are examples of some of the diversity of practice at a local level:

- **The Brent Climate Assembly (2019)** was commissioned by Brent Council following the declaration of a climate and ecological emergency and as part of their commitment to be carbon neutral by 2030. The assembly of 53 local residents, recruited to represent the population of Brent, considered the question 'How can we work together to limit climate change and its impact while

protecting our environment, our health and our wellbeing? Consider the Council, businesses and organisations, individuals'.<sup>19</sup> Over three Saturdays, the local residents came up with a set of criteria which they used to consider and then prioritise a range of possible future actions. A micro-site was set up prior to the assembly for the wider public to submit their own responses to the question. This solicited 326 comments which were fed into the process. The assembly was organised by Traverse.<sup>20</sup>

- **The Camden Citizens' Assembly on the Climate Crisis (2019)**<sup>21</sup> was commissioned by Camden Council and brought together 50 randomly selected residents to

consider the question “We are now facing a climate and ecological crisis. How can the council and the people of Camden help limit the impact of climate change while protecting and enhancing our natural environment? – What do we need to do in our homes, neighbourhoods, council and country?” The participants produced 17 actions after two evenings and a full day of deliberation in July 2019. These were presented to a full council meeting in October 2019 and set the direction of a new Climate Action Plan for Camden which was subsequently published in March 2020. The process was organised by Involve.<sup>22</sup>

- **The Leeds Climate Change Citizens’ Jury (2019)**

was funded and commissioned by the Leeds Climate Commission. The jury attempted to answer the question ‘What should Leeds do about the emergency of climate change?’<sup>23</sup> The process recruited 25 residents from across the Leeds city region who came together over eight Thursday evenings and a Sunday, for a total of some 30 hours of deliberation. In order to ensure the process was robust, fair and unbiased an oversight panel comprising 12 key local stakeholders was formed to agree the recruitment methodology, the overarching question and the identity of the 21 commentators who presented to the jury. The jury was organised by Shared Future.<sup>24</sup>

- **The Newham Citizens Assembly on Climate Change<sup>25</sup> (2020)**

was commissioned by Newham Council and involved 36 randomly selected residents in a process that lasted 3 evenings and a weekend. The participants responded to a letter sent to 8000 households across the borough inviting them to develop recommendations in response to the question ‘How can the council and residents work together to reach the aspiration of being carbon zero by 2050 at the latest?’ . Also included an online platform for members of the wider community to suggest recommendations that could be fed into the assembly and considered alongside the other inputs. The process was organised by Mutual Gain.<sup>26</sup>

- **The Oxford Citizens Assembly on Climate Change (2019)**

was commissioned by Oxford City Council and focused on five themes which the council felt it had some control and influence over. 42 randomly selected residents of the city of Oxford took part in two weekends of structured deliberation. Assembly members were presented with three visions of possible futures for Oxford developed by the City Council as well as voting on a series of specific pre prepared questions. The process, which was organised by Ipsos Mori,<sup>27</sup> considered the overarching question “The UK has legislation to reach ‘net zero’ by 2050. Should Oxford be more proactive and seek to achieve ‘net zero’ sooner than 2050?”<sup>28</sup>



Brent Climate Assembly  
Image © Traverse

## Creating impact, ensuring influence – what outcomes have been achieved and what have we learned?

Mini publics on climate change are commissioned for a range of reasons. Their outcomes will also be shaped by how they are designed and delivered by different organisations.

We have summarised here some of the key outcomes that could be expected from a citizens’ assembly or jury on climate change, illuminated by insights from climate assemblies that have already been delivered. Part two of this toolkit explores how to plan and deliver a process. However, first it is important to be clear what you are hoping to achieve by considering the purpose of the mini-public in the context of climate change.

The climate outcome of citizens’ assemblies and juries depends on the purpose they were commissioned for, and how they were designed and delivered. Some were commissioned to inform the council’s climate strategy development (e.g. in Oxford, Camden and Newham) whereas some were more about creating greater public participation in a wider conversation on climate change (e.g. in Leeds). Some have been commissioned directly from a local authority whereas others were commissioned by an independent body (e.g. the Leeds Climate Commission).

Our Common Climate analysed the impact three different climate assemblies, in Brent, Camden and Leeds, had on their council climate plans. This involved conducting interviews (with the commissioners, the delivery organisations and independent stakeholders) and a desk review (of media coverage, council announcements/documents and independent evaluations where available). The three assemblies/juries chosen presented a range of different size processes in different settings.



Leeds Climate Change Citizens' Jury  
Image © Shared Future

It is worth noting that those commissioning and delivering citizen assemblies and juries rarely analyse the impact beyond assessing whether the event was delivered to a satisfactory level. This seems partly due to budget constraints but also because it isn't always clear who has responsibility to analyse follow up of these deliberative processes. As a result, there is a very limited body of evidence to draw on. We conducted our own short research, but this is a snapshot in time, during a challenging year where local authorities are coping with an emergency pandemic. Ultimately the longer term impacts of citizen assemblies might not be realised some years after their implementation.

Typically research into the impact of a citizen assembly tends to focus on whether the recommendations are adopted into policy. However, our brief research shows there are multiple outcomes of a citizens' assembly other than creating citizen-designed policy. In the context of climate change, perhaps the most important impact that is evident is the political mandate they give to elected representatives, to enable ambition on a challenging, far-reaching crisis.

### Creating a robust mandate for political action

Now that there is a remarkably high level of concern about climate change, the challenge is in understanding what that means for taking action on climate. The typical methods for consulting the public, such as opinion polls and focus groups, can be a useful barometer of public opinion, but are less useful in guiding detailed action. Citizens' assemblies and juries provide us with the opportunity to understand the policy choices that people would support, having had time to learn about and deliberate not just on the science but also on the potential solutions.

Councillors in Camden, Brent and Leeds all spoke about how their climate assemblies had given them a strong mandate and legitimacy to be ambitious in addressing climate change. Our research suggests this maybe their biggest impact to date i.e. their potential to create a strong political platform for action.

**In depth:** Citizens' assemblies or juries offer space for a more in-depth exploration of public support for policy interventions, as well as using the wisdom of citizens themselves to design bespoke action. Evidence shows that politicians often underestimate public support for climate policy.<sup>16</sup> Creating a process for gathering the results of a more in-depth deliberation from a sample of the public that reflects the diversity of the wider population will in itself strengthen the mandate available to policy makers to respond to the climate emergency. This also ensures that policies are designed with the interests and needs of different social groups.

'A consistent refrain from politicians was that they did not feel they had a mandate to act radically on climate – despite high levels of public concern being reported in polls. Neither did they have a clear sense of whether policies they might put forward will be supported or opposed. As a result, the tendency is toward caution, at a time when scientific evidence on climate screams for rapid and radical action'

Professor Rebecca Willis (2020).

**Impartial:** It is harder to ignore the recommendations of a diverse body of citizens that reflect the wider population rather than the views of environmental activists or fossil fuel stakeholders who may be accused of being biased or partisan. The Chief Executive of Brent Council described how valuable it was hearing from such a broad range of their citizens, describing how the room of participants 'looked like Brent'. This underlines



Camden Climate Assembly  
Image © London Borough of Camden Climate Assembly



Newham Citizens' Assembly on Climate Change  
Image © Mutual Gain

the importance of a robust recruitment process for assembly and jury members. Emerging evidence shows that if a citizens' assembly or jury is well publicised, the wider public may tend to trust them more than many other institutions. For example citizens in the US state of Oregon when surveyed on 'quality of judgments' viewed the Citizens' Assemblies associated with the Oregon Citizens' Initiative Review as the most credible body (alongside criminal juries), comparing favourably to the state legislature and Congress. This suggests a citizens' assembly or jury could enable wide local support across the constituency, reaching beyond simply the views of the participants in the process.

**Trusted:** 'Mini publics' such as citizen assemblies or juries can increase the public support for a policy, as it can be seen as having been approved or suggested by a panel of citizens. The Irish citizens' assembly deliberated on the challenging topic of abortion law, ahead of a planned referendum. Following the referendum, which resulted in support for amendment of the law, public support for the outcome was high even amongst those that did not support the amendment. This has been partially attributed to the public perception that there had been a process of fair, due deliberation, with a citizen assembly producing recommendations that were respected.<sup>17</sup>

This is important in the context of addressing the climate emergency. Some policies will require changes to lifestyles that will not always be popular. Policies don't just need high levels of support but must also be perceived to be fair. Public deliberation tools are a very effective way to create this public support and perception of fairness.



Brent Climate Assembly  
Image © Traverse

## Increasing trust and changing the relationship between government and citizens

Public institutions and politicians are suffering from a lack of trust by the public. Taking on an enormous issue like the climate emergency, which will require interventions in the way people travel, heat their homes and enjoy their leisure, will require a shift in that relationship.

Deliberation, through an assembly or jury, can be a powerful way to increase the trust in institutions addressing the climate problem. By commissioning a citizens' assembly or jury and committing to act on the recommendations, a local authority is acknowledging they do not have all the answers, and that they want to work with their citizens to identify the best climate strategy. This can change the dynamic of the typical authority/citizen relationship towards one based on partnership, dialogue and trust. However, this is less likely achieved if a citizens' assembly is a one-off process without wider reach.

Publicising the mini public to other residents and placing it in the context of a broader public engagement programme, is important in ensuring this trust and partnership relationship is realised. For example the Camden assembly was part of a wider process of public engagement through multiple routes. A high level of trust creates the conditions for a local authority to make the difficult decisions and implement policies that create visible change.

Well facilitated deliberation creates a greater perception of common ownership over a problem. This changes the dynamic away from citizens expecting an authority to 'fix' the problem on their behalf, or at the other end of the spectrum, of public authorities expecting citizens to bear all the responsibility to change. For example in Camden, participants of the citizens' assembly described how it changed their perception of the local authority – feeling 'proud of their council' for opening up their decision making process to residents.



Leeds Climate Change Citizens' Jury  
Image © Shared Future

### Managing expectations

Managing expectations of what deliberation alone might achieve is important. Commissioners of citizens' assemblies or juries must be prepared to have a follow up response, otherwise cynicism and frustration will understandably set in from participants and the wider public. A citizens' assembly or jury that is not given a due response, or adequate implementation of recommendations, may lead to a further drop in trust in political processes and in public engagement processes themselves. If a commissioner does not want to commit to implement recommendations ahead of the assembly or jury, they can at least commit to a process of accountability, such as reporting back and explaining their response.

This does not have to be complicated, and examples include a council vote on the recommendations, establishing a committee to examine and respond to the recommendations, agreeing to respond in writing (and in person) to each of the recommendations by a certain date; explaining exactly how each recommendation will be implemented and if it feels unable to do so to explain exactly why not or reconvening the jury or assembly at a future date to check progress

Creating a wider public engagement process around the assembly ensures that there are multiple routes for deliberation and follow up, rather than putting all the expectation on the assembly itself.

David Kahane, ex-project director of the Alberta Climate Dialogue reflects:

"Gathering individuals to deliberate on common projects builds individual and community capacity and can support or push organisations and governments to better meet human needs.

While I share some of this optimism it is worth considering the negative potentials of deliberation and the ways in which public engagement can disempower participants and reduce their agency; reinforce exclusions and hierarchies; be manipulated; build capacities that are used for corrupt or negative ends; or be used to produce reports and recommendations that are never taken up or implemented".<sup>18</sup>

## Increasing agency

The experience of going through a citizens' assembly or jury often increases the agency of the participants. Citizens' assemblies and juries can generate a cohort of local people willing to engage in further activities to address the climate crisis. It is important for commissioners and organisers to identify opportunities (e.g. local organisations) to support their future engagement. For example, signposting towards a local organisation that could provide volunteering experience or activism opportunities. For many people, participating in a citizens' assembly or jury can be a hugely positive experience. Participants often report feeling respected and valued, so creating a shift in dynamic between citizen and authority.

There is some anecdotal evidence from Camden, Leeds and Brent, that participants who went through the citizen assemblies then went on to undertake individual or collective action. Planning ahead on how to support and harness this as part of a local authority's wider public engagement on climate would be beneficial. For example, Camden followed their citizens' assembly with a 'think and do' pop-up space to support further local climate action.



Leeds anti-airport expansion demonstration. Image © Simon Moore

## Improving climate policy – implementation of citizen assembly recommendations

The focus on citizen assemblies, by the practitioners and other advocates, is often on whether the recommendations produced by the participating citizens, are adopted into policy by the governing body (local councils in this instance). Certainly, a policy recommendation that is put forward through the assembly deliberations that is then adopted as a new policy is a tangible way of demonstrating impact. However, policy making is rarely that neat and linear, and as we have seen above, the impacts on policy making may be more on the political mandate. That said, there are instances of policy recommendations that are then reflected in a council's climate policy. It will always be hard to prove whether these would have become policy anyway, without the citizen assembly input, but some have referred to the citizen assembly input, for example in Camden and Leeds 2020 climate plans.

- **Oxford:** In response to its Citizens' Assembly Oxford City Council declared: "We've listened to the Assembly and our brand new climate emergency budget acts on its findings by providing at least £18m of new money to the City Council's zero-carbon mission, plus a further £1m of new money to ensure that we deliver on those investments'. The City Council also committed to providing a written response to all recommendations.<sup>29</sup>
- **Camden:** The members of the Camden Citizens' Assembly developed 17 actions, which were

presented by two of its members to a full council meeting.<sup>30</sup> In June 2020, the Council's cabinet approved a five year Climate Action Plan. The press release announcing the plan states 'The Climate Action Plan' proposes a five-year programme of projects and activities around the themes of People, Places, Buildings and Organisations that deliver on the 17 Citizens' Assembly recommendations and bring to life the vision of a zero carbon Camden'.<sup>31</sup>

'We have turned the citizens' proposals into borough-wide policies and community-led action in this Climate Action Plan'.  
Councillor Adam Harrison, Cabinet member for a Sustainable Camden.

- **The Brent Climate Assembly** recommendations will inform the development of 'a draft borough-wide climate emergency strategy'.<sup>32</sup>

Another related impact is that the experience of a citizens' assembly often led to an interest in adopting deliberative processes more broadly across other policy areas. Councillors, officers, and other stakeholders, many of whom were sceptical about the value of a citizen assembly prior to the experience, have since become advocates of deliberation for council policy making. Some of the initial scepticism often comes from the interpretation of deliberative



Brent Climate Assembly  
Image © Traverse



Lancaster and district Climate Change People's Jury  
Image © Shared Future

processes like citizen assemblies as trying to replace democratically elected decision making. However, most practitioners and advocates position deliberation as complimentary and enhancing democratic processes.

Most of the local authorities did not manage to ignite a wider public conversation around the citizen assemblies, due to lack of budget and integrated planning. Partly this is a result of the role they were perceived to play – a narrow focus of producing recommendations to inform policy making, rather than as a tool to start a wider public dialogue. However, those that were commissioned as part of a wider public engagement process, as we saw with Camden, did lead to wider public engagement.

### Fairer policies

Citizens' assemblies and juries also have a role in creating fair policies. Each process creates the space for hearing evidence, deliberation and then the crafting of recommendations. Deliberative processes bring a diverse group of people together who start to understand and appreciate the realities of each other's lives. Those taking part typically start to move from a position of 'what's best for me' to one of 'what's best for all of us' i.e. to consider the greater public good. Fairness often becomes a key consideration.

Climate policies that have not been designed to be fair – for example increasing tax on fuel that has a higher impact on lower income taxes – will not only lead to further inequality but is likely to face a back-lash and public rejection. This occurred in France, where amongst other policies fuel taxes led to the 'Yellow Vest' demonstrations in late 2018, which was one of the catalysts for the establishment of the French climate assembly. If enabling fairness is to be central in our attempts

to reach net zero, citizens' assemblies could be a powerful tool to design this into the policy response.

### Catalysing broader climate partnerships

The process of considering, commissioning, designing, delivering and then following up on a citizens' assembly or jury creates an opportunity to bring together stakeholders that might not otherwise do so in other settings and allow them to work in new ways.

For example, in Leeds, the citizens' jury oversight panel included the Chamber of Commerce, Extinction Rebellion activists, the City Council and the local voluntary sector, all around a table making decisions on the collective issue of climate.

An Oversight Panel running parallel to an assembly or jury brings together a diverse group of key local stakeholders to ensure the assembly or jury process is balanced and unbiased. We look at the role of such a body in more detail in Part Two.

An oversight panel attached to the process creates an opportunity for different organisations and stakeholders within the local authority area to consider the role they can play in implementing the recommendations from the jury or assembly alongside the local authority.

In Part 2 of this guide we will look at these issues in greater depth and consider the practicalities of running a citizen led policy making process.

## How might a climate assembly or jury effect change?

### The change that contributes to a positive climate impact

#### Catalysing broader climate leadership and shaping the decisions and actions of other organisations

##### What can this change look like?

The local authority is only one of many local stakeholders who can influence our response to climate change at a local level.

Local community organisations, businesses and campaign groups can also commit to respond to and implement

If the deliberative process has key stakeholders involved (for example on an oversight panel) then the local authority has created space for showing leadership amongst broader actors who also need to act on climate. This can identify potential partnerships to amplify the impact of the council's actions. recommendations from a deliberative process.

##### How can design of the process help to affect change in this way?

A project oversight panel made up of the key local organisations able to influence the response to climate change should be convened. Meeting in advance of the process member organisations should be encouraged to think about what steps need to be put in place for their own organisation to take into account the citizen recommendations upon completion of the process.

e.g. Leeds climate change Citizens' jury oversight panel (12 diverse organisations including the City Council, Extinction Rebellion and the Chamber of Commerce).

#### Increasing public trust in the local authority

##### What can this change look like?

Members of the public largely distrustful of our political leaders, may feel a group of randomly selected citizens that 'look like us, have legitimacy and so may be inspired to follow their recommendations and take action.

##### How can design of the process help to affect change in this way?

A resourced communication strategy is devised to run alongside the assembly or jury.

e.g. UK climate assembly (see p.37). Such a strategy is based upon transparency with the local authority being clear what decision is being considered, what power the assembly has, who the assembly members are, what information will be presented to them and how and when the local authority will respond.

#### Increasing agency of the participants and wider public to take action

##### What can this change look like?

Many participants talk about the impact taking part in a deliberative process has upon them and their actions. Some report changes in their own behaviour and others talk of taking steps to stimulate action within their own communities. Evaluators of the Camden Assembly heard participants speak of them 'taking action within their day-to-day lives, as well as considerations around how they could get involved in climate action on a bigger scale'.

"It has made me think in more detail about my lifestyle and how I can be more efficient, ie waste less, use less energy. It has made me want to influence my family and friends, telling them about what I have learned. It has made me think about how my actions can affect others in the world." Member of the Leeds climate change citizens Jury.

##### How can design of the process help to affect change in this way?

Resourcing a post assembly process that brings together citizens to plan what action they themselves might want to take.

Providing participants information on what action they can take after the process has finished

e.g. in Oxford at the end of the last session each participant was given a take home pack with suggestions for what action participants could take and how to start conversations about climate change with others.

#### Improving climate policy making – increasing the effectiveness of climate policy

##### What can this change look like?

Increasing the ability of government and other organisations to use and embed deliberative processes in their work and so respond better to the wider public's concerns around a meaningful and acceptable response to the climate emergency. This should lead to better climate policy making and policies that are more likely to be implementable, which should in turn better ensure carbon reduction targets are met.

##### How can design of the process help to affect change in this way?

Organising training opportunities parallel to the process or involving local authority staff and others in the delivery of the assembly or jury.

e.g. parallel to the Edmonton Dialogue the organising team ran workshops for civil servants, elected officials and others on deliberative methods.

e.g. in the Camden Assembly given the Council's commitment to the citizens' assembly model, building internal capacity around delivering them was a priority. However, there is a tension here, in Camden the central role of the Council in the organising of the process led to some (notably Extinction Rebellion) questioning the impartiality of the process.

## /// Part Two

### DESIGNING AN IMPACTFUL CITIZEN ASSEMBLY OR JURY

**E**nsuring the citizen assemblies or juries come up with a climate plan that is commensurate with the urgency of the climate crisis will be down to multiple elements in the design including the question set, the speakers chosen and the framing of the deliberation.

A citizens' assembly or jury must be delivered by independent facilitators who have expertise in designing and delivering these processes, otherwise its quality is likely to be compromised. Climate change is not simply a technical issue – it is highly political. Decisions about how the issue is approached and who are chosen as speakers will shape the deliberation and therefore the outcomes. Ensuring independence and neutrality does not mean giving equal weight to those that deny the science. Independence and balanced representation can be achieved without false biases. For example, by trying to ensure those who are not concerned about the climate emergency are present amongst the selected participants. Citizens' assemblies or juries are also highly flexible and could be used to inform and shape a particularly challenging area of climate policy, with a specific focus, such as options to address congestion, or they can be used to look at climate plans in their entirety.

The steps that are taken as a local authority develops and delivers climate policies and programmes is, of course, not linear and will inevitably require constant revision and adaptation. In the context of a policy cycle and the spectrum of public engagement, depending upon how much weight the process is given, processes such as assemblies and juries can be used to consult, to involve, to collaborate or to empower.<sup>33</sup>

In responding to the climate emergency, a citizens' assembly or jury might be used

- At the point where a vision is being created and/or when policies are being formulated and shaped.
- Where an authority is trying to design a climate plan that reflects the urgency – and there are internal challenges or a need to bring different elements of a strategy together.
- As specific policy proposals are developed, where an authority is trying to resolve a tricky specific issue or break an impasse on a policy area.
- As a decision-making tool, if the assembly or jury is given the power.



Brent Climate Assembly  
Image © Traverse

Many local authorities have declared a climate emergency. Commissioning a citizen assembly or jury can be an effective way for an authority with responsibility for climate action to start devising a plan to tackle the scale of the challenge. It is important to be clear on the expectations for the assembly or jury – what the commissioners expect to achieve from it and then what the participants and wider public expect. In order to achieve this clarity, here are some considerations:

## Before you begin

### Some first steps in designing a climate citizens' assembly or jury:

- **Consider declaring a climate emergency;** This is an effective way of demonstrating the urgency to act that is required.
- **Design a public engagement strategy and identify budget and resources;** consider who you want to engage with and why. Then decide which approaches are most suitable to meet your aims. This may or may not include an assembly or jury.
- **Ensure buy-in and commitment;** if you decide to organise an assembly or jury ensure buy-in to the process from the key decision-makers in the authority, including securing commitment to follow up action. This commitment to follow up does not have to be a commitment to implement the recommendations ahead of knowing what they will be, but as a minimum should be a commitment to provide a public response, by a certain date to what has been implemented and what hasn't and why.
- **Consider establishing a climate commission;** if you need to create space for a shift in conversation setting up an independent commission can create assurance amongst decision makers. The commission could then initiate a climate assembly or jury. A climate commission is typically established to be independent from a local authority, but with representatives in attendance alongside key stakeholders in business, voluntary sector, education and environment for example. They have a set terms of reference, to produce advice and guidance, but are not an official body. Examples include Leeds<sup>34</sup> and Surrey.<sup>35</sup>
- **Invite local stakeholders** to support a citizens' assembly and to play a role in implementation and follow-up (for example through an oversight panel or advisory group, see Part Two)
- **Commission a citizens' assembly or jury** to produce recommendations.
- **Produce a communication strategy** to run alongside the jury or assembly.

- **Consider a wider public engagement process** to gather input from across the community.
- **Design the process** with climate science and policy experts to advise on the structure and topics.
- **Consider what future role jury or assembly members might have** after the process is finished (e.g. a scrutiny role) and make sure that any such role is sufficiently resourced.

## When you are ready

- **Deliver the assembly** through an independent expert organisation, publicising it as widely as possible.
- **Publish and discuss the recommendations** – plan a follow up official response to the recommendations.
- **Commission a survey** to see how the public view the recommendations – is there a high level of awareness and trust in the assembly process, and support for the recommendations?
- **Commit to regularly review progress** of climate plans against the assembly recommendations and plan subsequent public engagement.

## Framing the deliberation and setting the question

In all assemblies and juries participants are tasked with exploring a particular question or set of questions. This will shape the tone and content of the deliberation. It should reflect the objectives for initiating the process. Generally, there is a choice to be made between enabling a very broad and open question to allow for a more open discussion, or a tight, specific set of scenarios or policy options.

Some recent examples in the UK have used very specific questions for shaping the deliberation. For example, in the Oxford Assembly, members were offered three visions of possible futures for the city developed by the City Council. Likewise, in a process in Edmonton (Canada) participants considered three scenarios for energy transition. This tight framing of the deliberation clearly has merit in that the final recommendations can deliver clear messages to policymakers on what action they should take. This can be useful to unlock a way forward on a particularly contentious area of policy. For example measures to control traffic can prove very unpopular. Tighter framing may also be useful for those anxious to respond swiftly to key events in the policy-making process. For example if policy is being linked to budget setting.

However, this tight framing may have disadvantages. The overarching question that guides the assembly or jury very subtly tells people what they should or shouldn't be talking about. By offering citizens



Brent Climate Assembly  
Image © Traverse

a set of policy options, the responsibility of knowledge generation is delegated to experts. This inevitably means some previously neglected sources of knowledge and differing perspectives may be excluded, as well as denying citizens the opportunity to identify their own unique bespoke solutions. It may also mean that processes fail to recognise and challenge the systemic causes of the climate emergency.<sup>36</sup> This has opened climate mini-publics up to criticism for framing in such a way they exclude some topics, perspectives and voices.

The framing of the deliberation may lead citizens to conclude that some issues are either 'on or off' limits. For example, in Edmonton the framing provided by the energy transition scenarios meant that Alberta's controversial carbon intensive oil sands were not a focus of discussion. This left the panel facilitators to reflect that panel members 'largely confined themselves to the policy options presented in the discussion paper... We were left to wonder what sparks of creativity might have resulted in additional or different directions were lost'.<sup>38</sup>

The framing of the topic will inevitably influence what theories of change are under consideration (a theory of change is the thinking behind why a certain set of activities will lead to the desired change). The wording of the overarching question, or more subtly the choice of external speakers, may dictate whether participants are encouraged or given permission to talk about what mechanisms might be in place to facilitate individual action versus the role of system change.

An example of adopting a more open question was that used in the Leeds Climate Change Citizens' Jury. Here the question considered by participants was "What should Leeds do about the emergency of climate change?" This gave permission for people to talk about a range of challenges, including the role of the local airport and the City Council's role in its future expansion. They subsequently concluded in their recommendations "we recommend stopping Leeds Bradford airport expansion – it is not compatible with zero carbon targets. To make this recommendation happen: Leeds City Council should not approve new roadbuilding or selling land to develop".<sup>39</sup> This might not have been a recommendation if the question set had been more narrowly defined.

The academic Gwendolyn Blue talks of how 'rather than opening up public issues to diverse meanings, mini publics can inadvertently close down public debate where only expert issue framings are considered valid, reasonable and credible'.

'Discussions can be closed down through a narrow framing of issues, particularly through appeals to neutral science, which can stifle the emergence of alternative explanations of the causes of the problem as well as alternate imaginaries for political and social change' (Blue 2015).<sup>37</sup>

## Should a jury or assembly only consider those issues that are within the responsibilities of a local authority?

In 2020 Kendal town council commissioned the Kendal Climate Change Citizens' Jury. Aware that the Town Council has limited power and responsibility when it comes to climate change, it decided to work closely with all other tiers of government in organising the process, to enable the recommendations to apply beyond the town council's mandate. The oversight panel includes senior officer and politician representation from town council, district council and county council as well as the presence of the local MP able to take forward any recommendations that must be pursued at a national level.<sup>40</sup> At each meeting members of the oversight panel speak about how their organisation is able to respond to the recommendations produced at the end of the process.



Leeds Climate Change Citizens' Jury  
Image © Shared Future

### Establishing legitimacy through independence

Trust in local politicians and our ability to have influence is low. In the Hansard Audit of Political Engagement (2019), when asked 'how much influence if any, do you feel you have over decision-making in your local area?' 75% of the respondents felt they had either not very much influence or none at all.<sup>41</sup>

### Many feel removed from local decision-making

When members of the public look at the membership of an assembly or jury, and see faces like their own, or someone who they can identify with, they may feel willing to give the emerging recommendations greater legitimacy. However, the well-known public cynicism about local decision-making processes means commissioners must work extremely hard to prove the process is in fact independent.

Such independence is usually achieved through two means: firstly through the appointment of skilled and experienced, independent assembly or jury facilitators and organisers; and secondly through the establishment of an independent oversight or advisory board.

Inevitably when the recommendations from the assembly or jury are publicly launched some will feel unhappy with their content. At this point they may feel inclined to criticise the process and unpick the methodology. Commissioners must be ready with a robust response. Local stakeholders and members of the public will want to understand who and how major decisions were made in the design of the process and be reassured that the jury has not been structured purely to deliver recommendations that are desirable to the commissioners. Those

that feel the assembly was a 'stitch up' or 'tick box' activity will feel even more cynical about future engagement with climate change policies.

Climate change assemblies and juries at a local level in the UK have all used an advisory group or oversight panel structure as a central part of the design. The size, membership and power of each of these varies between processes.

The Leeds Climate Change Citizens' Jury's oversight panel had a membership of 12 different organisations who met on four different occasions parallel to the process. The panel decided on:

- the recruitment methodology (in particular the make-up of the profile of the jury),
- the overarching question
- the identity of the speakers who presented to the jury.

Membership included representation from local government (the lead councillor and officer from Leeds City Council), the private sector (Leeds Chamber of Commerce and Yorkshire Water), campaigners (including Extinction Rebellion, Friends of the Earth, Youth Strike for Climate), academia (The University of Leeds), the local community and voluntary sector (Voluntary Action Leeds, and the Racial Justice Network) and others. Meetings were chaired by Prof Andy Goldson, the chairperson of the Leeds Climate Commission.

The Newham Citizens Assembly was overseen by a stakeholder oversight group 'representing a cross-section of local interests in the borough', whose role was to ensure that the assembly design and delivery was fair and that 'the final recommendations of the

assembly can be trusted as being the result of an impartial and balanced process'.<sup>42</sup> Its five members included representation from a local community and voluntary organisations network, Newham Citizens UK (a civil society organisation), Extinction Rebellion Newham (a campaigning organisation), Prof Darryl Newport from University of East London (an academic) and the Newham United Dialogue (an interfaith network).

### Who should be on an assembly or jury oversight panel?

When working to identify the membership of an oversight panel for the Kendal Climate Change Citizens Jury an organising group consisting of three local councillors (cross-party) and two climate change academics from Lancaster University took part in a power mapping activity to stimulate their thinking. An independent facilitator encouraged the group to list on small pieces of paper those 'local individuals and organisations who have the power to be able to influence local action on climate change'. The group attempted to reach consensus on which stakeholders should be positioned closest to a central point on the floor that represented those with the most power to affect change. The group then discussed which of these should form the membership of the oversight panel.

Deciding who should be a member of an oversight panel, and indeed who should make that decision, is difficult. Too many members will make the body unwieldy and bring added cost. Too few may seem tokenistic. It is worth putting effort into getting it right, whilst achieving a balance between perfection and being pragmatic. Being transparent about the rationale used (such as attempting to reflect a wide range of stakeholders with potentially differing perspectives) is important; as is offering an opportunity for members of the oversight panel to suggest where there might be significant gaps in the membership. One rationale for membership is to ensure influencers, and those able to take action should, if possible, be included. Hence the importance of including the private sector.

## Achieving high quality deliberation

Mini publics such as citizens' juries and assemblies work because they bring together a diversity of citizens, reflective of the geography of an area and enable those citizens to be heard and for their opinions and experiences to be valued. They are of sufficient length for a complex problem to be explored in depth and for different perspectives to be challenged. They enable citizens to consider a broad range of perspectives and to interrogate these before producing their own recommendations, that may then be prioritised through the use of a robust collective decision-making process. Clearly this takes time.

### What is deliberation?'

'Deliberation includes exchanges between two or more people around a common topic with back and forth reaction to each other's views, puzzling over an issue to work something out collectively, the sharing of reactions, trying to understand the position of others, willingness to be persuaded by another's position.

There is the possibility of disagreement, conflict and argument and discussion of that disagreement. Ideally all this discussion should lead to a consensual resolution or of conclusion to the question being explored'. (Davies et al 2006).<sup>43</sup>

The following section starts to unpack how the ideal of deliberation can be achieved through a climate assembly or jury.

### How long should it be?

Climate change can be described as a wicked problem; one which is difficult to clearly define, has many interdependencies, is socially complex and one where the understanding of the problem is constantly evolving. Furthermore, as it has no clear solution, attempts to address it may lead to unforeseen consequences, responsibility does not sit conveniently with one organisation and is characterised by chronic policy failure.

More recently climate change has been described as a 'super wicked problem'. That is, one that comprises of four key additional features: time is running out, those who cause the problem also seek to provide a solution, the central authority needed to address them is weak or non-existent and it involves "a

situation in which the public and decision makers, even in the face of overwhelming evidence of the risks of significant or even catastrophic impacts from inaction, make decisions that disregard this information and reflect very short time horizons".<sup>44</sup>

Clearly for a gathering of citizens to navigate their way around this super wicked problem and the complex landscape of actors involved will take a significant amount of time. This then presents practical and logistical problems, especially when a large number of citizens are involved. Local level assemblies and juries have experimented with different lengths of time. Newham's Citizens' Assembly consisted of three evenings and a weekend, the Brent climate assembly was three Saturdays, the Leeds Jury was the equivalent of 28 hours and the Camden assembly lasted 12 hours. The desire to run a shorter (and hence less resource intensive) process is obvious, but is likely to be a false economy. For example the evaluation of Camden's citizens' assembly by a team from University College London concluded 'overall it was clear that the amount of time was generally a barrier in the delivery of the planned activities and for properly engaging with such a complex topic'.<sup>45</sup>

Likewise, the final report from Brent (which took place over three days) included the following observation; 'On reflection a fourth workshop with our assembly members would have allowed them to take a more prominent role in the framing and phrasing of their recommendations and in the development of the final report'.<sup>46</sup>

Various organisations have attempted to put together guidelines and standards for the organisation of deliberative processes such as citizens' assemblies. In the UK one of the best known is Involve, who have recently worked with a group of practitioners to produce a set of 'Draft Citizens Assembly Standards'.<sup>47</sup> This includes the suggestion that an essential feature is that "there is sufficient time for each of the three phases of the citizens assembly: learning, deliberation and decision-making" and that "the assembly lasts for at least 30 hours (four days) in total". Ideally, it describes the assembly lasting for 45 hours (six days) or more as a desirable standard. Its conclusion that "the time available is proportionate to the question/purpose", suggest that the climate emergency warrants investment in a longer process; one in which people have time to come to an understanding of the challenging issues, develop relationships, share experiences, challenge each other, consider new information and move from an individual perspective to consider what may constitute a vision for the greater public good.

In the guide 'Enabling National Initiatives to take Democracies Beyond Elections' produced by the newDemocracy Foundation they suggest; "Where public opinion measures the public's top of mind (1-2 minute) response to a question or issue, public judgment is their 30-50-hour response after having access to diverse sources of information, critical thinking and deliberation with other diverse members of their community. This combination of time, information and deliberation produces a deep understanding of a topic and the nuanced trade-offs involved".<sup>48</sup>

## The role of the facilitator

The role of the facilitation team in a deliberative process is central to its success. This role is fundamentally different to that of a chairperson within a traditional open meeting and requires a unique set of skills that draws upon a long history of participatory practice. The reputation of a jury or assembly held amongst its participants and also by those 'outside the room and looking in', whether policy makers or indeed the wider public, will largely be shaped by the actions of the team of facilitators. Generally local authorities have commissioned independent facilitators. If local authorities are considering using their own staff to facilitate mini-publics, they will need to think carefully about how to ensure the process is perceived as independent and that staff have the requisite skills and experience.



Leeds Climate Change Citizens' Jury  
Image © Shared Future

Space does not allow this toolkit to produce an exhaustive list of the behaviours, skills and knowledge the facilitator of a deliberative process should demonstrate. However, for the benefit of those considering commissioning a climate assembly or jury it is important to understand the core competencies that commissioners should expect from a facilitator.

The following selection, adapted from a list of core competencies from the International Association of Facilitators,<sup>49</sup> gives us an idea of what matters or needs to be considered:

### **A. Planning appropriate group processes by:**

- Selecting clear methods and processes that foster open participation and engage those with varied learning or thinking styles.
- Preparing time and space to support group processes (arranging physical space, planning use of time and providing an effective atmosphere).

### **B. Create and sustain a participatory environment by:**

- Demonstrating effective participatory and interpersonal communication skills.
- Honouring and recognising diversity and ensuring inclusiveness.
- Managing group conflict.
- Evoking group creativity.

### **C. Guide the group to appropriate and useful outcomes by:**

- Guiding the group with clear methods and processes (e.g. actively listening, questioning and summarising).
- Facilitating group self-awareness about its task (varying the pace according to the group's needs, assisting group reflection).

### **D. Building and maintaining professional knowledge by:**

- Maintaining a base of knowledge.
- Knowing a range of facilitation methods (problem-solving, decision-making, group methods).

### **E. Model positive professional attitude by:**

- Practising self-assessment and self-awareness (reflecting on behaviour and results).
- Acting with integrity.
- Trust group potential and model neutrality (encouraging trust and the capacity and experience of others).

However, there is a danger in simply listing a menu of facilitator competencies without considering the context within which they are operating. For many who will be seeking to commission a citizens' assembly or jury for the first time, deliberative processes are a mystery. It should be recognised that the facilitator brings a wealth of experience and perspectives on how best to organise and facilitate a process. They also have a huge role to play both in terms of what they achieve 'backstage' (e.g. designing processes, negotiating agendas, aligning purposes, 'trying to make the results count') as well as the more obvious facilitation that happens 'front stage' (Escobar 2019).<sup>50</sup>

"Facilitation is one of the single most important aspects of any deliberative process. It involves the management of everything that happens "inside the room", group cohesion, assistance with thinking critically (rather than a simple exchange of opinions) and task completion. The facilitation team are responsible for taking a selection of everyday people with generally only a basic understanding about a topic, through a shared citizen-led learning experience, to making decisions together that will shape the future of their community, and to do so in a neutral, non-leading way. It's as hard as it sounds".<sup>51</sup>

It is a myth that the professional facilitator, by demonstrating core competencies and then organising a predetermined model automatically means that communities will be given a voice in influencing policy responses to the climate emergency. It is more complicated than that.<sup>52</sup>

Instead it is helpful to recognise the power that the facilitator wields in the design of a process and to think of facilitation as a craft requiring a comprehensive apprenticeship enabling them to experience a broad range of highly politicised contexts. (Wakeford and Pimbert (2013)).<sup>53</sup>

Almost inevitably with a large group of people there will be more than one person playing the role of facilitator. This means teamwork and a strong relationship between facilitators. As Lynn Carson of The newDemocracy Foundation comments: "Co-facilitation works very well because two or more facilitators can attend to both task (getting the job done, staying focused on the group's purpose) and maintenance (ensuring each group members is being heard, that the group is working harmoniously)".<sup>54</sup>

In large processes it is usual that a team of facilitators is put together specifically for that project. Establishing clear lines of responsibility between facilitators will then be important, as will knowing who might take on the primary responsibility for the overall design of the process and who might be playing a more subsidiary or supporting role. Those roles might be to become small group facilitators and note-takers, visual minuters, or helping to capture learning or

the many other things that will need to be done to make people feel comfortable and involved. In some cases, good facilitation might even include delegating some of these roles to the assembly participants. However it is organised, and whoever undertakes facilitation roles, to enable all participants have an equal chance of being included within the deliberation facilitators need to be supported and trained to understand how much power and influence they could wield and how to use it responsibly.

**TIP:** Don't underestimate the importance of the "soft" people-skills that help participants feel comfortable and welcome. Humour is essential.



Camden Climate Assembly  
Image © London Borough of  
Camden Climate Assembly

## Structuring the sessions

Deliberative processes such as assemblies and juries consist of three main elements

- **Learning:** participants learn firstly, from each other as they hear the opinions and experiences of their fellow citizens and secondly, from the invited external 'speakers. In addition materials may be shared with participants in advance of or during the process (written or visual).
- **Deliberation:** citizens try to understand the positions of each other. They reflect and challenge and they start to consider the hard choices and trade-offs that must be made.
- **Decision-making:** participants finally draw some conclusions. Consensus may be explored but is not essential. Recommendations or statements are recorded and may be prioritised.

The learning and deliberation phases may not necessarily take place chronologically. Participants may move between learning and deliberation as they interact with each other, the external speakers and any supporting materials.

The following are two examples of how a deliberative process in response to the climate emergency can be structured (Leeds and Oxford). There are many commonalities. An early introduction from the commissioning organisation serves to emphasise the importance of the process and is a chance to explain how the recommendations will be responded to. Regular icebreakers, frequent opportunities to work in pairs, small groups and occasionally as one large group (plenary) help to vary the discussions. Other similarities include plenty of breaks, a visioning activity and prioritisation at the end of the process.

However the two processes differed significantly in the freedoms given of participants to have an open discussion. Oxford assembly participants considered a number of scenarios prepared in advance by Oxford City Council. In Leeds, participants were able to talk about whatever they wanted, within the broad overarching question "what should Leeds do about the emergency of climate change?" Halfway through the process the Leeds Jury decided which topics to investigate in more depth within the next few sessions and in the final session they worked in small groups to write their own recommendations.

## Leeds Climate Change Citizens Jury (25 members)

Note: in Leeds the speakers who presented to the jury were called 'commentators'.

Session	Activities	Additional information
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Introduction from Kate Locke: Leeds Climate Commission</li> <li>» Icebreaker (human bingo).</li> <li>» Participatory activities in small groups: Mapping activity (using maps of local neighbourhoods), Problem tree (identifying root causes of the problem)</li> </ul>	Each evening session was 2 ½ hours in length.
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Visioning activity: 'what are your visions for the Leeds region for 30 years time?'</li> <li>» Introduction to climate change: presentation and Q and A</li> </ul>	Commentators delivering the presentation were where possible identified and approved by the oversight panel.
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» The contribution of Leeds to climate change: presentation and Q and A.</li> </ul>	The end of the session included a discussion on working with the media to promote the work of the jury
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» How do we affect change, an international perspective and what next? Presentation and Q and A.</li> <li>» Prioritisation of future topics: participants discussed and agreed which themes they would like to explore in more depth in sessions 5 to 7.</li> </ul>	An introduction to theories of change (without using that language)
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Transport: presentations and small group discussions with three commentators.</li> </ul>	Participants heard a short presentation from each commentator who then sat in different parts of the room. Participants then decided which commentator to spend time with and for how long
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Housing: presentations and small group discussions with four commentators.</li> </ul>	
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Communication and community involvement: presentations and small group discussions with five commentators</li> </ul>	
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Additional themes: a) the role of Leeds City Council</li> <li>b) models of finance: two commentators.</li> </ul>	Additional themes identified by jury members
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Recommendation writing: small group discussions, consensus building (where possible), writing, editing their own recommendations and prioritisation.</li> <li>» Launch event: three weeks after the final session participants launched their recommendations at an evening stakeholder event attended by 80 people.</li> </ul>	<p>Session 9 was a full day (Sunday).</p> <p>During the session, facilitators decided to include a 'statement writing' session to help articulate the mood within the group.</p>

## Oxford Citizens Assembly on Climate Change (42 members)

Day	Activities	Additional information
<b>Day 1 (am)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Introduction from Cllr. Tom Hayes: Oxford City Council (Cabinet member for Zero Carbon Oxford) and process facilitators IpsosMori.</li> <li>» Ice breaker in small groups.</li> <li>» Introduction to climate change: presentations and Q and A.</li> <li>» What can we do about climate change? Presentations and Q and A.</li> </ul>	<p>Arrival and breakfast each day was at 9 AM. Each presentation slot consisted of between one and four main presentations (of up to 10 minutes) plus additional shorter presentations (usually three-minutes), followed by small group reflection and a question-and-answer session.</p> <p>Weekend two came after a three week gap.</p>
<b>Day 1 (pm)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Theme 1: Waste reduction: presentations and Q and A.</li> <li>» Theme 2: Buildings: presentations and Q and A.</li> <li>» End of day reflection: Write on postcards 'What's the one thing you're taking away from the first day of the assembly?' (5:30pm finish)</li> </ul>	<p>After discussions with key stakeholders at Oxford City Council, it was decided that the Assembly should focus on five themes related to climate change which the Council had some control and influence over.</p>
<b>Day 2 (am)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Ice breaker</li> <li>» Theme 3: Transport: presentations and Q and A.</li> <li>» Theme 4: Biodiversity and Offsetting: presentations and Q and A.</li> </ul>	
<b>Day 2 (am)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Theme 5: presentations and Q and A.</li> <li>» Wrapping up and reflection: small group reflection and prioritising of five themes</li> </ul>	<p>Take away task for participants 'talk to family, friends, colleagues; How important is this to them?; And what do they think should be prioritised?; Rewatch presentations from this weekend' (online).</p>
<b>Day 3</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Welcome back from Cllr. Tom Hayes: Oxford City Council (Cabinet member for Zero Carbon Oxford).</li> <li>» Reflections on previous weekend</li> <li>» Behaviour change and thinking about the future. One, fifteen minute presentation and one, forty five minute presentation/activity (with Rob Hopkins) during which participants imagine a 'mayoral statement from 2030 about having achieved net zero by 2030'</li> <li>» Deliberation: participants revisited themes 1-4 and were asked to consider and then score three pre-prepared potential future scenarios for each (including co-benefits and trade-offs).</li> <li>» The chair 'reflects on the lessons learned so far today'.</li> </ul>	<p>In the morning participants were asked to consider and comment on a 'summary of findings from weekend one'</p>
<b>Day 4 (am)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Deliberation: participants revisit theme five and consider and then score three potential future scenarios.</li> <li>» Scenario preference: in small groups participants discuss the overall scoring results for each theme and vote for which scenario they think Oxford should aim for.</li> </ul>	
<b>Day 4 (pm)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Responsibilities: discussion then voting on who should take responsibility for each theme, and how it should be paid for.</li> <li>» 10 quick questions: participants answer questions from the city council in a brief questionnaire.</li> <li>» Final vote: 'should Oxford be more proactive and seek to achieve net zero sooner than 2050?'</li> </ul>	

Reflections on the Oxford Citizens' Assembly from the Oxford Citizens' Assembly Network included:

'Build in more time within the agenda and the overall duration of the citizens' assembly for meaningful absorption and reflection of the scientific and technical information, as well as the emotional processing of implications given the scale, seriousness and complex nature of the climate emergency'.

'Allow for sufficient flexibility and iteration in the design to flex and accommodate new ideas from Assembly members'.<sup>55</sup>

## Who takes part? Thinking through recruitment

One of the defining features of the jury or assembly is the selection of the participants. Advocates argue that through random selection, in theory, every resident or citizen has an equal opportunity to take part through what is sometimes called a 'civic lottery'. This gives the process its legitimacy.

However, unlike a legal jury, and alongside incentives or rewards, most citizen juries and assemblies use a process of 'random stratified sampling' or 'near random stratified sampling'. This ensures the inclusion of the voices and opinions of people from social groups normally marginalised within policy making. The intention behind such sampling techniques is to bring together a group of citizens who may be considered as a mini version of the wider population. An example of a so called 'mini public'.

In order to achieve this stratified participation a profile of the jury or assembly is agreed and used as the basis for the selection of its members. Typically, the profile of an assembly or jury reflects the local population, in terms of age, gender, ethnicity and geography, as well as some typical additional criteria detailed in the box below. To achieve a stratified sample it is normal to have to recruit a larger pool of participants, and then, based on checking their demographic information to draw from that pool the eventual sample.

The question of which method to use to reach and encourage people to apply to join the assembly or jury will be dictated by availability of budget, local infrastructure and factors of time and technology. Always important is choosing a methodology which will, in the eyes of others, be sufficiently robust, impartial or legitimate.

### Strategies used to recruit include:

- Mass mailings using the Royal Mail address database e.g. 4000 recruitment letters were sent randomly across the Leeds city region by the Sortition Foundation for the Leeds climate change citizens Jury.<sup>56</sup>
- Door to door and on street recruitment e.g. Camden's community researchers, a pre-existing group of local people who live in Camden and are familiar with the borough, had been previously trained by the council and then employed to carry out various tasks that need an inside knowledge of Camden's communities. They were used to find and recruit participants.
- Existing panel members e.g. The Oxford City Council citizens panel. Like many local authorities Oxford has an existing panel of residents used for consultations, in this case recruited through an initial mailing of 13,500 households. Most members of the citizens assembly were recruited through the panel. However, recruitment from the panel alone was insufficient to meet the required profile. Gaps were filled by a second stage of on street recruitment.
- In Brent a combination of on street recruitment, previous lists of consultees and social media recruitment methods were used. In the first round of recruitment 40 members were successfully recruited. In order to reach out to those groups that proved difficult to recruit the organisers then used additional social media.



Newham Citizens' Assembly on Climate Change  
Image © Mutual Gain

## How many participants?

Typically, Citizens Assemblies are made up of between 40 and 150 participants (Camden and Oxford were both 50 strong and Newham was 36). Citizens Juries in the UK are typically made up of between 20 and 40 people. In the absence of hard evidence on whether a larger citizen assembly has more policy impact than a smaller jury, the commissioners must be pragmatic. Considering firstly what numbers are required for it to have local legitimacy, and secondly the size of the available budget.

## Climate citizens' assembly and jury recruitment profiles

	Recruitment profile	Dropout rate
<b>Brent climate assembly</b>	Age, gender, ethnicity, social economic background and where they lived within the borough.	Brent experienced a high initial dropout rate.  Of the 59 recruited, 41 attended the first session prompting the organisers to recruit 16 new members who were brought up to speed through an additional assembly session.
<b>Camden citizens' assembly</b>	Age, gender, ethnicity, ward (i.e. geography), housing tenure.	55 members attended the first meeting,  49 attended all three meetings.
<b>Leeds climate change citizens' jury</b>	Age, gender, ethnicity, indices of multiple deprivation, disability and attitude to climate change	25 people were recruited,  23 attended the first session, average attendance over the nine sessions was 21.
<b>Newham climate assembly</b>	Gender, age, ethnicity, profession, where in the borough people lived, attitude to climate change	43 participants were selected,  38 attended the first session and  36 finished
<b>Oxford citizens' assembly on climate change</b>	Gender, age, ethnicity, disability and area of Oxford residency. According to the assembly report 'Other variables were monitored but not used as selection criteria such as social grade, educational attainment, working status, length of Oxford residency, and environmental and political attitudes'.	50 participants were recruited,  44 attended the first day and  42 attended the last day

In deciding on a recruitment strategy, difficult decisions and various trade-offs must be made. Which criteria should we use in the recruitment profile? Which traditionally excluded voices must we ensure are present? Which voices must be present to ensure legitimacy?

For example, in deciding the recruitment profile for the Lancaster District Climate Change People's Jury the decision was made by the oversight panel that legitimacy would be increased if there was representation from not just the city of Lancaster,

but also Morecambe, surrounding rural areas and nearby Carnforth and its surrounding area.

Organisers must also decide what the minimum age of participants should be. For Lancaster the minimum age was 15 and for Brent 16. However this younger demographic will in itself present challenges in how information might be presented and whether young people feel confident in raising their views within a small group session or a large plenary. Additionally, any safeguarding considerations from involving vulnerable people needs to be carefully considered.

For the Leeds Climate Change Citizens' Jury it was felt essential that participants held a range of opinions on climate change. The government's BEIS attitudes tracker (2019) had already asked its respondents a question about 'how concerned, if at all, are you about climate change?' By including a similar question within its recruitment invitation to the Leeds jury it was possible to match the different categories of answer to this question to that within the national statistics. An analysis of the 21 regular jury attendees showed that six of the participants responded to the question as 'very concerned', ten as 'fairly concerned' and five 'not concerned'. Intentionally planning for and showing this sort of attitudinal variation in its participants undoubtedly gave the jury some additional external legitimacy. The voices of those who expressed some scepticism to climate change were also a valuable part of the internal deliberation.

## The role of the 'speaker' or 'commentator'

A constant feature across all deliberative processes is the role of the external speaker who presents to and is questioned by the members of the jury or assembly. In some processes these outside 'experts' are known as 'speakers' or, borrowing terminology from the legal jury, as 'witnesses'.

The briefing papers for speakers at the National Climate Assembly made it clear that speakers were invited to either be informants (explaining the range of views or options that exist on the topic) or advocates (presenting their personal opinion or that of the organisation they represent).<sup>57</sup>

In the Leeds process this external input was delivered by 'commentators', in recognition of the fact that huge amounts of expertise rest with the citizens themselves and not only with external experts. We have used this term below, unless the process discussed had their own.

### Who chooses the speakers?

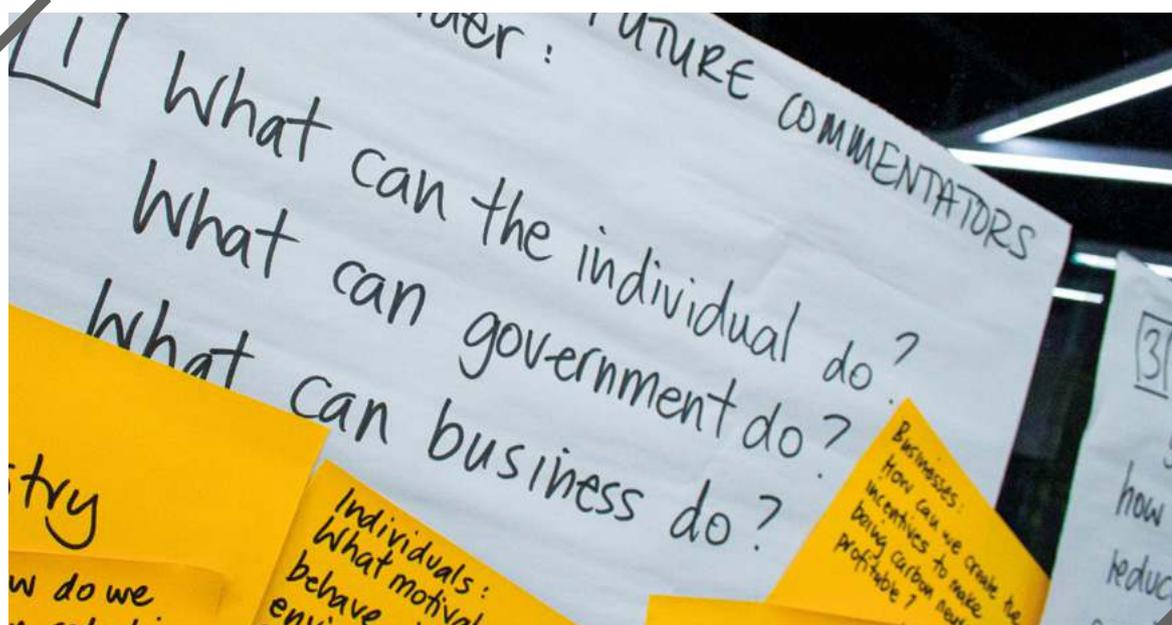
For the UK climate assembly, four expert leads were appointed.<sup>58</sup> Part of their role was to identify the key questions on how to get to net zero for each of the three topics: how we travel; in the home and what we buy; land use, food and farming. They suggested suitable speakers based on the advice of members of the 12 person academic panel.<sup>59</sup>

For the Lancaster Climate Change Citizens' Jury, speakers were identified and selected by the oversight panel made up of a diverse range of local stakeholders.<sup>60</sup>

In Newham a call-out on the assembly webpage invited any local groups or individuals that wished to present evidence for the assembly to contact the organisers. In many processes citizens themselves are given the opportunity to suggest potential speakers.



Leeds Climate Change Citizens' Jury  
Image © Shared Future



Typically, the speaker presents to the assembly or jury for between five and twenty minutes. After their presentation participants are given the space to reflect, usually in small groups, before putting their questions directly to the speaker. Time permitting a period of further reflection may then follow.

Considering how to get the best out of speakers or commentators is crucial, but there are many variables at play which will influence their influence on the members of a jury or assembly. This includes:

- their status or professional credentials,
- their impartiality or ability to accept opposing viewpoints,
- whether their use of language was inclusive, concise and clear (or contained lots of unexplained jargon or scientific terms),
- their presentation style, and their use of data, storytelling, anecdotes or other 'framing' of information,
- their body language, and their ability to relate, to interact and connect with citizens.

Overall, their emotionality, empathy, brevity and identity will all have some impact. To produce some consistency and make it easier for participants to compare and relate the different information they are receiving it is common to provide speakers with a thorough briefing prepared in advance of a presentation by the facilitators. Inevitably a commentator will draw upon their own background, experiences and biases in articulating what makes a 'good presentation'.

For the Newham Citizens' Assembly each commentator, after being selected by the

oversight group and facilitators, was asked to answer the following questions:

- "Who are you and what is your perspective on the climate change emergency?"
- "What are people saying about your perspective on the climate change emergency?"
- "If you were in charge of the Council, what three recommendations would you be making to ensure you make a positive difference to the lives of those living and working in Newham?"

There are other ways through which information can be shared with jury or assembly members. In advance of the Oxford Citizens' Assembly, participants received a 16 page briefing pack, explaining the process and a basic introduction to climate change and net zero.<sup>61</sup> A similar pack in Newham included some preparation to be completed in advance of the first session as well as tasking members to watch a BBC documentary by David Attenborough.

Drawing on good practice from climate crisis communications, the Citizens Climate Research Project, which drew lessons from Ireland's Climate Change Citizens' Assembly, suggests seven guidelines for experts and witnesses when presenting in a deliberative forum. This uses the acronym ENGAGES: everyday language, noteworthy impacts, get creative, action, good news, emotional stories and shared values.<sup>62</sup>

In the Leeds Jury, commentators were briefed that participants would show 'red cards' if they felt confused by a presentation or if there was use of complex language and jargon. PowerPoint presentations were banned.

make it clear within the recruitment materials that additional resources are available to support people's participation. These include covering childcare, caring, interpretation or accessibility costs. Or, if required, other one-to-one support, especially where the person faces a physical or cognitive barrier to their involvement. These are best explained and any questions talked through during the first contact with potential participants.

## Inclusion

Inclusivity is always going to be key when making policies that effects the lives of every citizen. The approach to recruitment described above goes some way to avoiding the problems of self-selection and the domination of those who may typically attend consultation and engagement events. However, there may still be barriers to achieving diversity and inclusivity. For example those designing deliberative processes must ask themselves:

- **What are the Incentives?**

**Why would people want to take part?** We all need incentives, and there is always a cost, in terms of time or inconvenience to participate, which is especially important if you are uncommitted in your view about the topic at the outset. Understandably the majority of the public is disillusioned with consultation activities. To counter this and get people through the door it is common to combine an invitation with incentives. These may take different forms.

A financial incentive reflecting the time commitment required is generally agreed to be essential. For example in Camden this was £150, in Leeds and Newham £250, and in Oxford £300. An additional reason for offering a financial incentive, alongside that of a firm commitment to action detailed in the recruitment letter, is that it further encourages participants to believe that their deliberations will make a difference and that their participation matters.

- **What are the barriers?**

Understanding what might be the barriers, whether intended or unconscious, that stop people participating, helps improve attendance. Most processes

*"I got to contribute in my own way and didn't have to hold back. People don't expect the things I say when they first see me, but I was able to say those things here."*

- A young assembly member from Brent.

- **Who speaks and for whom?**

What levels of representation are sufficient to balance out differences in how people participate? Some people are confident speaking in public groups with strangers. Others are not. Many parts of our society have been recognised to be historically ignored in policymaking, and continue to be marginalised from decision-making processes and public engagement activities. As a result some voices are too seldom heard. Inevitably such groups will in the future and indeed are already disproportionately bearing the

brunt of the effects of the climate emergency.

It has been recognised globally and within the UK that the poorest and most traditionally marginalised communities are most adversely affected by the climate emergency. In recognition of this, should organisers seek to over-recruit such marginalised voices? Is equality or equity in inclusion the goal?



Newham Citizens' Assembly on Climate Change  
Image © Mutual Gain

*"I am a normal everyday citizen with normal everyday hopes and dreams. I have no preconceptions around climate change and no particular axe to grind. I am beginning to realise that something needs to be done and I want to contribute to the debate about what that might be."*

*"the group well represents our fair city in terms of ethnicity, socio-economic class, age, sex and disability (and pretty much any other factor you can think of)."*

– Two members of the Leeds Climate Change Citizens' Jury.

For some, if over-recruitment of people from traditionally marginalised groups takes place we will reduce the chances of a few voices being drowned out by others. For many, especially those who are from marginalised communities, this will increase the legitimacy of the process. Furthermore, if some members of the jury do drop-out it may mean that significant groups are left seriously or totally under-represented.

However, a counterargument is that policymakers and other members of the public may feel the process is less legitimate if its membership does not exactly statistically reflect population demographics. Practical examples of this kind of dilemma are given below.

In the Lancaster district, 96% of the local population is white. A truly representative jury of 30 would consist of 29 white jury members. Concerned about the discouraging impact of finding oneself the only person of colour within a larger group, and the knock on effect on perceptions of inclusivity if that person later dropped out, the oversight panel for the Lancaster District Climate Change People's Jury decided to over-recruit so that three people on the jury would be black or from another minority ethnicity. Likewise, in Leeds the oversight panel agreed to recruit additional members of these following groups, each by one more than the numbers that reflect the local population; young people, women, all the main ethnic groups except white British and residents from within deciles one and two of the index of multiple deprivation. In each case it was important to be transparent about this decision.

### **Citizen led recommendation writing and decision-making.**

The culmination of the process is the writing of recommendations. In most juries and assemblies this includes their prioritisation. The framing of the overall deliberation and the degree of power and freedom

which citizens have in deciding the content of their recommendations will influence the design of the process used for recommendation writing. Where the jury or assembly is performing a more consultative role, with citizens prioritising from a list of pre-prepared strategy options, this is very different from recommendation writing where citizens themselves are identifying their own strategic priorities.

#### **Who writes the recommendations?**

For the Brent Climate Assembly the final report was written by members of the team at Traverse (the facilitators) and included some interpretation of the work of the Assembly. Inevitably this means that the authors (rather than the participants) must make decisions about what quotes and conversations should be included within the body of the report. The final report was shared with assembly members to give them an opportunity to read it and comment prior to publication (12 out of the 53 participants read the report and provided feedback).

In the final report of the Leeds Climate Change Citizens' Jury there is no interpretation made of any of the conversations or decisions made during the jury. The report summarises the methodology and then lists the recommendations written, agreed and prioritised by the citizens themselves. Inevitably this may mean that there is less depth to the report.

As part of the Edmonton Citizens Panel on Energy and Climate Challenges, a 'Citizen Writing group' was formed made up of 8 volunteers who met for an additional 6 hours to 'support the development of recommendations and the creation of the final report'. Members had to complete an application form to be selected for the role.



Newham Citizens' Assembly on Climate Change  
Image © Mutual Gain

Some processes ask participants to use templates to ensure each recommendation is written in the same format. For example each recommendation should be supported by a rationale and be based on some source of information or evidence. Others will take a more open or narrative approach and then ask, perhaps through a follow up workshop or report for policy-makers to respond and add such detail within their responses. Every context will vary depending on the culture and approach used in the initial design, the expectations of the commissioners and the adopted style of facilitation.

The collective decision-making procedure used during an assembly or jury similarly varies across processes. Some practitioners favour an approach that encourages participants to build consensus where this is possible and test for agreement. This is easier within smaller jury style processes, and if achieved means it is possible to avoid voting until the very end of the deliberation. This can avoid people getting into entrenched, argumentative or conflicted positions.

In Newham, assembly members developed six themes to frame their recommendations. Under

each theme they wrote a general message and then specific recommendations. Each recommendation required 80% support from assembly members to be accepted. This meant that 21 of the 24 recommendations received approval.

In Leeds, all recommendations that came from the group were recorded in the report irrespective of the number of votes received. The Leeds report arranges the recommendations in priority order according to the number of votes each received.

In Camden, assembly members were firstly asked to sort ideas at their tables using a traffic light system:

- **Green:** a great idea to be progressed,
- **Amber:** an interesting idea that needs development,
- **Red:** an idea not worth pursuing further.

Further prioritisation took place before 18 ideas were worked up in more detail. Finally, potential actions were presented to the full assembly and members voted using anonymous ballot papers on the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the action.



Newham Citizens' Assembly on Climate Change  
Image © Mutual Gain

<p><b>Clear waste and recycling instructions</b></p> <p>Easy-to-access info on how to approach waste management, emphasising waste reduction rather than just more recycling</p>  	<p>What criteria needs to be considered?</p>
<p>What can the Council do to support: Itself? (in its own operations)</p>	
<p>Businesses and organisations?</p>	
<p>Individuals</p>	
<p>Local community (local groups, schools)?</p>	

Brent Climate Assembly  
Image © Traverse

## A communication strategy

Ideally the resourcing of an assembly or jury process should include a commitment to communications and media work. Having a strategy and then ensuring it is sufficiently resourced means those running deliberative processes are able to both increase the visibility and transparency of the process and to publicise the subsequent recommendations.



UK Climate Assembly  
Image © Fabio de Paola/PA Wire

### Climate Assembly UK

Communications and media work for the national assembly was handled by a communications team from Parliament and the non-profit Energy and Climate Intelligence Unit who dedicated a number of staff members to working on the planning and build-up to the assembly and during its deliberations to raise the profile of the process. Approximately one fifth of the total cost of the assembly was dedicated to communications work. A strategy detailed what messages would be used at which point in the process using which media channels, linked to a timeline of key newsworthy events. The team thought carefully about how in particular to build effective stakeholder and Parliamentary engagement around the process. Media briefings were held at each weekend including a dedicated 10 minute interview slot for journalists to speak with willing assembly members. The welfare of assembly members was paramount and for those members interested in communications work, advice on talking to the media was given and any interviews with them were conducted in the presence of one of the communications team.<sup>63</sup>

However, it will not always be the case that communications surrounding an assembly or jury can be as heavily resourced as in the case of the UK Climate Assembly. Kendal Town Council, commissioners of the Kendal Climate Change Citizens' Jury reached out to local volunteers to form a communications subgroup.<sup>64</sup> This has produced a strategy, an agreed way of working and a clear process whereby any media work is signed off by jury organisers prior to release. Kendal's communications strategy has been informed by a number of key questions:

- 1. What is the ultimate goal of the communications surrounding the jury?**
- 2. What are the key messages that will help us achieve this goal?**
- 3. Who are the key people that will ultimately determine the fate of our goal?**
- 4. How are we going to reach these key people?**
- 5. What actions need to be taken month by month to achieve our goal?**
- 6. Who will oversee each action?**

## Climate assembly and jury communications in action

Each of the presentations and panel discussions from the Oxford Climate Assembly was live-streamed on Facebook.

For a month huge posters of each of the faces of all 150 members of the French Climate Assembly were displayed on the outside of the CESE Assembly building in Paris.

An Australian Citizens' Jury (on genome editing) will share its deliberations through a TV documentary series.

To increase the profile and legitimacy of the process, key public figures were asked to make statements on the role of the National Climate Assembly (e.g. Director of the Confederation of British industry).

A dedicated website can improve transparency around all elements of the process for example on recruitment.

Most assemblies and juries encourage key people to attend sessions as observers. Fully briefed in advance, the observers often become advocates for the process.

A recommendations launch event with Assembly members presenting some of their recommendations can serve to both raise the profile of the jury or assembly and underline its citizen led nature.

Veteran practitioners in this space are guiding organisers of Citizens' Assemblies to firstly use accessible, appealing language (e.g. 'selected by lottery' not 'randomly selected', 'honest conversation' not 'deliberation' etc.) and secondly to focus less on explaining and more on storytelling.<sup>95</sup>

In the Leeds Climate Change Citizens' Jury participants were asked after the first few sessions if they would like to take part in media work. Most were interested and chose which opportunity they would be happy to take part in from writing anonymous statements to taking part in radio chat shows.

### Deliberating and learning together

This guide has started to unpack the essential elements of a climate assembly or jury; the safeguards and requirements that should be in place to ensure a robust process, the role of the facilitator and the importance of designing a structure which will enable learning, deliberation and decision-making to take place in an inclusive manner. However, there are many additional considerations when working on contentious or complex topics. From a facilitators' perspective the aim of a deliberative process is always to create the ideal conditions for deliberation and learning.

It is essential that commissioners and organisers understand the challenge of designing a process which recognises and values different ways of knowing, being and learning. This should not be seen as an inconvenient barrier to be surmounted or avoided, but a pathway towards strengthening a process and getting the best from our citizens.

There is a danger with treating citizens as 'empty vessels' waiting to be filled up with the knowledge of experts. We know that despite the irrefutable weight of scientific evidence on the climate emergency, people, whether politicians, policy makers or ordinary citizens, still struggle to do anything about it. If the point is to make change happen, we need to consider if processes structured around witness presentations and question-and-answer sessions serve to suggest that only certain types of knowledge and ways of communicating are valid in this space.

Participants may come to feel that emotion has no place here and neither does personal experience and storytelling. They may then struggle to relate it to their own lived experience and personal priorities.

Diarmuid Torney, a member of the expert advisory group of the Irish climate assembly reflected with his colleagues that "the expert communications process employed in the Irish case could be enhanced by including more personal testimonies alongside scientific evidence. The power of personal, emotional and creative storytelling and imagery is regularly emphasised in climate change communications literature and could be better employed in future citizens' assemblies".<sup>65</sup>



Leeds Climate Change Citizens' Jury  
Image © Shared Future

“the overly formalised exchange of reasons that is so central to the traditional notion of rational deliberation can be seen as a way of excluding those who do not master the method of logical debate’. ‘The key is to recognise that deliberation also requires conditions that foster emotional engagement, mutual nurturing and effective tie to one’s community’. (Escobar 2011).<sup>66</sup>

‘Exchanging narratives about personally significant life episodes, sharing meals together and participating in activities designed to create a sense of group identity may be necessary to creating the emotional connection needed to motivate the kind of argument desired. (Rosenberg 2007).<sup>67</sup>



2050 visions by members of the Newham Citizens’ Assembly on Climate Change. Image © Mutual Gain

*When reflecting on the Oxford citizens’ assembly, the Oxford citizens’ assembly network suggested that space must be created for methods that allow for visionary/creative thinking (for example time machines, writing letters from the future). Such tools can “help generate energy and a sense of hope and support of change that in turn can inspire others”.<sup>68</sup>*

Oxford Citizens’ Assembly Network (2020).

The box below starts to explore some of the ways organisers and facilitators can encourage and value different ways of knowing, learning and communicating.

## Tools for learning and deliberating

Mix formal and informal approaches.

Use poetry, music, and other art forms (e.g. in the Leeds Climate Change Citizens Jury commentator Sai Murray used song as part of his presentation).

Participatory mapping (e.g. in Leeds small groups worked on maps of their own neighbourhoods to identify what was helping and hindering a response to climate change).

Use and value humour.

Learning experiences and visits (e.g. a proposed citizens jury on sustainable transport is exploring the idea of participants using different forms of transport to get to and from sessions).

Photography, imagery (e.g. in day one of the Edmonton citizens panel participants were asked to select a photo that represented their hopes, fears or concerns about being a panel member on the topic of climate change).

Use a range of approaches that engage feelings and motivation and generative thinking as well as intellectual understanding.

Prepare food together.

Visioning (e.g. in Oxford assembly members were asked to write a letter or draw a picture telling someone about what the future net zero Oxford would look like).

Role-play, theatre techniques (e.g. in Newham participants explored visions from different perspectives using role-play).

Encourage, welcome and value emotion. Engage the heart not just the head.

Problem trees (e.g. in Lancaster participants used a large drawing of a tree to start to unpack the root causes of the problem 'climate change has become an emergency').



Mapping activities Leeds Climate Change Citizens' Jury  
Images © Shared Future



### Simple, clear and jargon free communication

One assembly facilitator reflected that "some members, for instance, were initially unfamiliar with the term 'emissions'".

## The importance of values

Part of what deliberative processes such as citizens' assemblies and juries bring to policy-making is the opportunity for people to connect policy issues such as the appropriate response to the climate emergency, to their own lives and what matters to them. Participants will respond to the information they are given, or the experiences and opinions of others, through the values that they hold dear. In some processes an attempt has been made to try and make sure that these values are openly considered and articulated. This helps to explain the communicative power, the unique character, and added value of citizen deliberation, as opposed to running yet another internal consideration of what is technically the best solution in terms of its cost and benefit.

In the Edmonton process participants spent a considerable amount of time exploring and ultimately prioritising the values they felt councillors and the administration should keep at the core of decision-making on energy transition issues. To achieve this, panel members first heard a presentation that helped to clarify the difference between values, preferences and interests.

They then looked at a set of scenarios that helped to unpack the role of values before articulating their own, developing a shared understanding of these, working through the tensions that might exist between them and then prioritising them. Their final set of values were; sustainability, equity, quality of life and balancing individual freedom and the public good.<sup>69</sup>



Role play as part of the Newham Citizens' Assembly on Climate Change  
Image © Mutual Gain

Facilitators from the Edmonton Energy and Climate Challenge reflected that:

'In most citizen deliberations, a discussion of values is crucial because the policy choices cannot or should not be made on technical or scientific grounds only. MacKinnon et al (2018)'.<sup>70</sup>

## Critical thinking

All practitioners recognise the importance of participant's ability to think critically. The Australian deliberative engagement specialists Mosaic Lab see critical thinking as the 'ability to interrogate information (presentations, documents etc.) and critically assess if the information is adequately addressing the information needs of the group or topic'.<sup>71</sup> They suggest that supporting citizens to use the skills of critical thinking is an important element of a deliberative process and have produced resources to help this become a reality.

In the Newham citizens assembly, within the initial information session participants were shown a film about critical thinking to help inform their work during the process. Similarly the authors of a UN sponsored deliberative democracy handbook identified a set of six key points for critical thinking. These are clarity, accuracy, relevance, depth, breadth and logic.<sup>72</sup> For each they created associated questions, with the suggestion that facilitators make prompt cards for participants as a continually available reminder of critical thinking techniques.

## Taking assemblies and juries online

Covid-19 has forced many organisers of deliberative processes to experiment with online assemblies and juries. Facilitators and commissioners have been forced to consider the advantages of online at the same time as addressing any personal prejudice against deliberation that isn't face-to-face. Those designing deliberative processes are recognising that a blend of online opportunities that enable people to meet together at the same time (synchronous activities) and also enable people to deliberate and reflect at a time that suits them (asynchronous activities) have great value.

There are likely to be advantages and disadvantages of online processes (as with face to face), for example those reluctant to speak in a face to face situation may find it easier to communicate online. Long-term, helping up-skill people with online tools that may be useful for them in other parts of their life may be hugely beneficial.

However, challenges of moving online exist and must be responded to. These include; digital exclusion and the reinforcing of existing inequalities, as well as the risk of the creation of new hierarchies and inequalities. The challenges of creating relaxed social interaction between participants must not be underestimated, as well as recognising that our online attention span is generally shorter than face-to-face engagement and more prone to distraction. Equally, we have less non-verbal clues to follow, which can be a challenge for facilitators in monitoring participant involvement and satisfaction.

### Online climate change deliberation in action

Climate Assembly UK was forced to go online for the final weekend of four.<sup>73</sup> Using Zoom, the remaining session was broken up into smaller chunks of no longer than two hours spread over three weekends (Saturday morning and afternoon and Sunday morning). Thought was given to making sure people's safeguarding and wellbeing was paramount.<sup>74</sup> Having experienced both online and face to face sessions 51% of those who completed an evaluation survey concluded that 'the ideal location for an assembly that takes place over more than one weekend is a mixture of in-person and online'. Only 3% said the ideal location was 'all online (everyone meets via internet/phone)'. The survey seemed to reveal that ideally 'the first weekend (at the very least) should be done in person and any move online needs to be based on careful consideration of assembly members' access needs'.<sup>75</sup>

The French Citizens' Convention on Climate moved online over the course of a weekend in early April to consider the Coronavirus crisis and to release 50 of their 150 measures in an attempt to contribute to the debate with government on 'a way out of the crisis'.<sup>76</sup>

Drawing on the experience of those skilled in online engagement, we need to:

- do everything we can to make sure that digital exclusion is addressed. For example, making clear in recruitment materials that equipment (laptops/tablets and internet access) will be provided as well as offering coaching support for those with

limited digital skills. Recognise that online does not work for everyone, organising alternative processes which may better cater for some people's needs.

- make sure that technical issues are swiftly and easily resolved. This may mean such issues are dealt with by a dedicated technical person/people who can be easily reached off-line (by phone or text) or online (e.g. waving a yellow card) so avoiding the issue becoming the focus of the whole group.

As the Democratic Society suggests in its guide to designing an online public deliberation, 'a simple 'lift and shift' online will not work as well, if it even works at all.'

**The Lancaster Climate Change Citizens Jury** was three quarters of the way through its work when the government's Covid-19 lockdown was introduced (six out of nine sessions had been completed). In advance of moving sessions online, participants were spoken to on the phone to check their desire to take part in online sessions and to identify any barriers to their participation (e.g. access to equipment, broadband and digital skills.) Subsequently six jury members were loaned laptops (preloaded with zoom), through Lancaster University's digital inclusion project and a quarter of participants received some telephone coaching before taking part in some practice zoom sessions.

**The Kendal Climate Change Citizens' Jury** is entirely online and started in early July 2020.<sup>77</sup>

As with face-to-face engagement, for the facilitator there is a temptation to use the latest tools and approaches in process design. We may identify platforms that are excellent for generating ideas and questions, others for collaborating on recommendation writing and others for prioritisation. However, if possible it is important to first identify what digital skills and confidence levels people have before deciding which platforms and tools should be used in a deliberative process. For example, it may be the case that some participants are only able to join through a smart-phone. This makes taking part in videoconferencing at the same time as accessing a collaborative document (such as a Google Document) extremely difficult. In this case the provision of a tablet or laptop may be necessary.

## Sources of information on the use of online participation:

• OECD: a series of articles answering the question 'How can digital tools support deliberation?'(2020).<sup>78</sup>

• Which online platforms?<sup>79</sup>  
A comparison spreadsheet from the team at Campaign Bootcamp, which forms part of a series of blogs 'Going virtual: Top tips for trainers and facilitators' (2020).<sup>80</sup>

• Digital tools for participation: where to start? Some thoughts from Involve on some of the tools available for different elements of a deliberative process (2020).<sup>81</sup>

• Sciencewise 'don't stand so close to me: dialogue in the time of distancing' (2020).<sup>82</sup>

• My Society's Digital Tools for Citizens' Assemblies (2019).<sup>83</sup>

• Using Digital Tools & Methods to Engage Residents in Covid Recovery (2020).<sup>84</sup>

• Mosaic Lab Online engagement and the hard to reach(2020).<sup>85</sup>

## Extending the conversation and spreading the message

One of the most significant critiques of deliberative processes such as citizens' assemblies and juries is a concern about the rest of the public who were not selected to join the process and are unable to be in the room. It feels at first sight like having a deep conversation with a few people. Is it worth all that effort?

Practitioners have responded to this in a number of ways. One is through providing opportunities for citizens to make 'community submissions' as part of, or running in parallel to a deliberative process. Another is through having a communication strategy that aims to help citizens recognise the legitimacy of a group of citizens, who can be seen as deliberating on their behalf. Or by making assembly or jury materials available and recording presentations to enable the wider public to engage with the content. All are attempts to extend the conversation beyond the room.

Community submissions typically involve an open invitation for members of the wider public to send in comments for consideration by jury or assembly members. As part of the Camden Citizens' Assembly on Climate Change over 600 ideas for actions were collected from wider community engagement surrounding the assembly.<sup>86</sup> The online commonplace platform was used to collect 225 submissions of proposals as well as ideas gathered from local businesses and engagement events in schools.<sup>87</sup> 213 of these were then selected for consideration by the Assembly.

Newham residents were invited to make submissions to its climate assembly through the Pol.is online platform. The opportunity was promoted for three weeks via social media, the Council's 'Newham Mag' and local libraries. The platform allowed local residents to submit their own statements and to vote on other people's statements. 244 people participated and 307 statements were submitted.<sup>88</sup>

For the French national climate convention, public submissions could be made between each session. In advance of the next session a synthesis document was prepared by external consultants and reviewed and finalised by three volunteer members and the process governance committee. This document was then given to assembly members upon their arrival.

Community submissions such as those described above do give the opportunity for some outside of the room to have their voices heard. However, there are risks that the profile of those that make submissions may not reflect the wider population. A review of community submissions to Newham's online platform revealed that they were not representative of Newham's population. For example 48% of respondents were white British compared to 27% of the local population.

In designing such opportunities we must be clear and transparent about their role and their design. Important questions include;

- How will the opportunity be publicised to encourage widespread participation?
- How exactly will the information gathered be used in the assembly process?
- Who will decide which information is presented to the assembly and which is not?
- Will demographic or other information on those making submissions be publicly available? If not, how do you ensure lobbying or campaign activity doesn't undermine expert evidence and public confidence?



# Conclusion

We are experiencing a climate emergency and local authorities are at the forefront of a response to this hugely complex problem. Citizens' assemblies and juries are one of many tools available to the local authority anxious to ensure that citizens are at the centre of local climate action plans.

For the politician unsure of a mandate to take action commensurate with the enormity of the challenge, assemblies and juries present a structured opportunity for citizens to define what action should be taken. In the UK climate assemblies and juries are still in their infancy as an accepted and commonplace method of policy making. It is only through the honest and open sharing of learning that we can continue to refine and build high quality public deliberation.

Done well they have the potential to radically change the relationship between citizen and local government.

When facing up to big policy challenges there is much to gain if we can find effective ways to include the informed recommendations of everyday citizens.

# Appendix 1

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Deliberative Democracy:** A form of democracy in which deliberation is central to decision-making. Fishkin and Luskin suggest that deliberative discussion should be: Informed (and thus informative), balanced (include contrary arguments), conscientious (participants should be willing to talk and listen, with civility and respect), substantive (arguments should be considered sincerely on their merits, not based on who offers them) and comprehensive (all points of view held by significant portions of the population should receive attention).<sup>96</sup>

**Participatory Democracy:** Individual participation by citizens in political decisions and policies that affect their lives, especially directly rather than through elected representatives. It can include a degree of deliberation, but due to the large numbers of people involved generally includes some form of prioritisation or voting on policies or laws directly.<sup>89</sup>

**Mini-public:** Deliberative mini-publics are institutions in which a diverse body of citizens is selected randomly to deliberate together about an issue of public concern.<sup>90</sup>

**Citizens' Assembly:** A Citizens' Assembly is a body of citizens who come together to deliberate on a given issue and provide a set of recommendations, options, or a collective decision to the convening body. Typically numbering between 40 and 200 people the participants are selected by a mini-public (stratified random selection) process. See also the description in the methods section of Participedia.<sup>91</sup>

**Citizens' Jury:** a small group of randomly selected citizens, that reflect the demographics of the area, that come together to reach a collective decision or recommendation on a policy issue through informed deliberation.<sup>92</sup> Typically they number between 20 and 40 people the participants are selected by a mini-public (stratified random selection) process. See also the description in the methods section of Participedia.<sup>93</sup>

**Peoples' Assembly:** Peoples' assemblies are a way for a group of people to discuss issues or make decisions collectively.<sup>94</sup> People's assemblies are a form of direct participatory democracy, usually organised by citizens themselves, often as part of a political campaign or social movement. Though without legal or statutory power they can be used to influence public policy or as an organising tool for forms of direct action. Such assemblies have been used widely by Extinction Rebellion and the Occupy movement.

# Appendix 2

## OTHER RESOURCES

**Innovative Citizen Participation and New Democratic Institutions: Catching the Deliberative Wave.** (2020) OECD.

<https://biturl.top/eqiQ3e>

**How to run a citizens' assembly. A handbook for local authorities based on the Innovation in Democracy Programme** (2020).

<https://biturl.top/ayYFFf.pdf>

**Facilitating Public Deliberations:** a series of podcast conversations with practitioners, advocates and academics.

<https://facilitatingpublicdeliberation.libsyn.com>

**Too Hot to Handle? The Democratic Challenge of Climate Change** (2020) Rebecca Willis, Bristol University Press, 2020.

**Participedia** A crowdsourcing platform for researchers, activists, practitioners, and anyone interested in public participation and democratic innovations.

<https://participedia.net>

**The following organisations have been mapping the growth of climate assemblies and juries;**

- At a UK level: the Climate Emergency Network.  
<https://www.climateemergency.uk/blog/citizens-assemblies>
- At international level: the Centre for Climate Assemblies. <https://climateassemblies.org>
- In the UK Involve also keep an updated list of assemblies and juries irrespective of topic.  
<https://www.involve.org.uk/citizens-assembly-tracker>

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