

# FINDINGS OF THE CLIMATE ASSEMBLY UK STAKEHOLDER SURVEY

## Summary of key points

- While Climate Assembly UK (CAUK) was commissioned to inform the work of Parliament, it has also proved a valuable resource for stakeholder organisations outside of Parliament and Government;
- CAUK has influenced stakeholders' thinking, work, and interactions on climate change both in terms of the idea of using a citizens' assembly and the recommendations for climate policy coming out of CAUK;
- The assembly achieved a wide reach that includes engagement with CAUK's reports and communications, and mentions of CAUK in roundtables, speeches, policy work and government consultation responses;
- Stakeholders were better informed about the topics and outcomes of CAUK than the mechanisms of running the citizens' assembly itself;
- Stakeholders consider that including the voices of members of the public in policy-making is as important as including the voices of members of the public in campaigning and public debate.

## Introduction

CAUK brought together 108 members of the public selected to reflect the wider UK population. They met over six weekends in 2020 to examine the question, 'how should the UK reach its target of net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050?'. Assembly members heard evidence from speakers with a wide range of views on how the UK should reach its climate target. They then discussed the issues with one another, before making recommendations about what the UK should do to reach net zero by 2050.

The initial stages of CAUK's official evaluation focused primarily on the assembly process, along with its impact on assembly members themselves. It also touched on the assembly's impact on the UK government and Parliament. This briefing covers the results of a separate stakeholder survey jointly developed and run by the official evaluators and Involve to plug a gap in this work: the impact of CAUK on stakeholders outside the UK Government and Parliament.

## Methodology

The stakeholder survey was conducted by Involve in partnership with the assembly's independent evaluation team. The stakeholder survey was issued in February 2021 and received 165 responses from organisations and individuals. One respondent was an assembly member, whose results were omitted from this report. The survey was anonymous and contained 11 questions, with space for open comments on three questions.

## Who took part

Of the 165 survey respondents:

- 30% had been closely involved in the assembly (Advisory Panel member, Academic Panel member, speaker, observer);
- 30% had been somewhat involved in the assembly (attended one or more briefings about the assembly or the launch of its report - and had not been more closely involved);
- 36% had had some contact with the assembly (received the assembly's newsletter, read all or part of its report, saw content about the assembly on social media/in the media, visited the assembly's website - and had not been more closely involved);
- 4% had had no previous contact with the assembly.

Of the 165 survey respondents that shared the type of organisation they work for, 29% worked for a charity, 15% worked for an academic institution and 14% worked for a business. 8% worked for devolved or local government and another 8% worked for a trades union. 5% worked for a think tank and 4% worked for Parliament (UK Parliament, Scottish Parliament, Welsh Senedd or the Northern Ireland Assembly). 1% worked for a public service such as the NHS and 8% did not work for an organisation.

## Results and conclusions

The large number of responses to the stakeholder survey is itself testament to the assembly's reach.

### **The stakeholder survey indicates that CAUK influenced stakeholders' thinking, work, and interactions:**

- 85% said they or their colleagues had discussed the assembly with colleagues or work contacts;
- 78% said their own thinking or work had been influenced by the idea of CAUK (for example, the use of a citizens' assembly);
- 63% said their own thinking or work had been influenced by CAUK's recommendations.

**The survey results also suggest that the assembly achieved a wide reach.** In addition to the above, respondents reported engagement with the assembly including: 61% who had read all or part of one of the assembly's reports; 53% who said they or their colleagues had visited the assembly's website; 48% who said their organisation had mentioned the assembly in its communications; 36% who said they or their colleagues had mentioned the assembly at roundtables or in speeches, and 38% who said they or their colleagues had mentioned the assembly in policy work/reports. 19% said they or their colleagues had mentioned the assembly in government consultation responses or evidence to parliamentary committees.

The survey shows strong consensus amongst respondents on the future use of citizens' assemblies and similar methods, including by Parliament. This includes agreement that stakeholders should take account of the assembly's recommendations in their work.

- 85% strongly agreed or agreed that the UK Parliament should use methods such as citizens' assemblies again in its work;
- 83% strongly agreed or agreed that Government should take account of the recommendations when developing policy, for example in deciding which policies to implement;
- 87% strongly agreed or agreed that methods such as citizens' assemblies are a good way of involving people in making recommendations on important issues;
- 87% agreed or strongly agreed that media coverage of climate change should seek to incorporate the opinions of ordinary people;
- 86% agreed or strongly agreed that stakeholders should take account of the recommendations when campaigning and influencing decision-makers, for example in developing campaign and lobbying strategies.

The survey results suggest that stakeholders were better informed about the topics and outcomes of CAUK than the mechanisms of running the citizens' assembly. 88% said they have a lot or a little knowledge about what the assembly recommended in its final report and 90% have a lot or a little knowledge about what topics the assembly looked at. Whereas 77% said have a lot or a little knowledge about how the assembly members were selected and, 76% have a lot or a little knowledge about how the assembly weekends were run.

The survey shows that there is general agreement among the stakeholders surveyed that the delivery of CAUK was impartial, ambitious, and inclusive. Of those that were able to give an answer on these aspects of CAUK, 76% agreed or strongly agreed it was impartial, 77% agreed or strongly agreed it was ambitious, and 85% agreed or strongly agreed it was inclusive. 64% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed it was impactful.<sup>1</sup>

51 (31%) respondents answered the open-ended question asking if they have anything else to add. Many stakeholders shared that their involvement with Climate Assembly UK made them consider how they could deliberative methods in their own context, and many also evaluated the effectiveness of citizens' assemblies as a deliberative method from their perspective. By way of illustration, examples of comments include:

*"Prior to observing the Assembly, I was sceptical about its impact. However, having witnessed the impact of the Assembly first hand in Birmingham I am strongly advising the NI government that they should undertake a similar exercise"*

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<sup>1</sup> 141 of 165 (85%) of respondents answered the question about whether they agreed or disagreed the Climate Assembly UK was impartial; 151 of 165 (92%) of respondents answered the question about whether they agreed or disagreed the Climate Assembly UK was ambitious; 143 of 165 (87%) of respondents answered the question about whether they agreed or disagreed the Climate Assembly UK was inclusive; 135 of 165 (82%) of respondents answered the question about whether they agreed or disagreed the Climate Assembly UK was impactful.

*"The extent to which the assembly has influenced the credibility of citizens' assemblies with local, regional and national governments has allowed us to be more proactive in putting forward deliberative approaches as part of policy development."*

*"Boroughs should do this on a local level"*

*"I'd love Climate Assembly thinking to be incorporated into local decision making, particularly with controversial policies like Low Traffic Neighbourhoods."*

*"I believe that with modern technology and the complexity of modern living that citizen assemblies represent a fair and democratic option."*

*"It's raised the profile of the need for bottom-up engagement in energy and climate issues"*

*"The Assembly offers a route to ensuring that climate issues are mainstream and not seen as just those of green lefties."*

*"I am interested in the extent to which Climate Assemblies represent a true picture of how ordinary people in ordinary situations deliberate on climate change"*

*"Has it had much impact? Govt ministers all said they were taking recs on board: but any sign of it? Demoralising for participants (and observers) if nothing comes of it."*

*"The big question is how this novel exercise in direct/ participatory democracy will interface with/ feed into existing and more representative systems of democracy."*

Comparable data on stakeholder reach and impact does not exist for other citizens' assemblies so there is no benchmark against which to assess these figures. However, we believe these results to show a very good reach. **While CAUK was commissioned to inform the work of Parliament, it has also proved a valuable resource for stakeholder organisations outside of Parliament and Government.**

## Useful resources

Report: [Evaluation of the Climate Assembly UK](#) by Stephen Elstub, David M. Farrell, Jayne Carrick and Patricia Mockler (July 2021).

Video: [Climate Assembly UK members on their report](#) by UK Parliament (September 2020).