Covid-19, recovery and the path to net zero

Summary of recommendations

1. **A large majority of assembly members (79%) 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' that, 'steps taken by the government to help the economy recover should be designed to help achieve net zero'.** Their rationale included that the government should: limit, or put conditions on, investment in high carbon industries; make the most of the economic opportunities presented by the path to net zero; deal with Covid-19 and climate change together where possible and take advantage of the current opportunities for change.

2. **Another large majority (93%) of assembly members 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' that, 'as lockdown eases, government, employers and/or others should take steps to encourage lifestyles to change to be more compatible with reaching net zero'.** Assembly members backed homeworking and changes to how we travel, and again noted that this "tough and sad time" presents an opportunity for change. They also saw a key role for government in providing leadership and information, alongside roles for business and local areas.

3. Assembly members **tended to avoid expressing 'strong' views about whether or not Covid-19 and lockdown had made them think or feel differently about the how the UK should get to net zero.**[1] Their comments generally reflected the changed context created by Covid-19 rather than requests for alterations to specific recommendations made earlier in the assembly.

4. Overall assembly members agreed that their thoughts and feelings about the path to net zero in general had changed (62%). They talked about a new sense of opportunity for change, and altered perceptions of what is possible (e.g. what government can do). They also noted lifestyle changes that are already happening. Some highlighted the economic impacts of the pandemic, suggesting for example that they make reaching net zero more difficult.

5. **73% of the assembly members who had looked at 'how we travel' during assembly weekends two and three said that Covid-19 and lockdown had changed their thoughts and feelings about how to get to net zero in this area.** Key themes in their discussions included:

   - **Changes happening to air travel**, with some assembly members suggesting that people may continue to fly less;

   - **Homeworking** becoming more acceptable;

   - **The impact on public transport**, with people currently less willing to use it and questions about whether or not that will last long-term;

   - **Increases in cycling and walking**, although some questioned whether these would hold during the winter.

6. **Only a minority of assembly members said that their thoughts and feelings had changed about the other topics discussed prior to lockdown.**

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[1] They tended to choose 'agree' or 'disagree' in all four relevant votes, rather than 'strongly agree' or 'strongly disagree'.

Covid-19, recovery and the path to net zero

The arrival of Covid-19 in the UK saw an additional item added to the assembly's agenda. At the request of both Parliament and assembly members themselves, space was made for consideration of the changed context for reaching net zero created by the Covid-19 pandemic, and its impacts.

The resulting session took place at the final assembly weekend on 16th May. At the time, strict lockdown measures were in place in all four UK nations.

What did the assembly consider?

Assembly members did not hear detailed evidence on the changed context created by Covid-19. This was partly because of time constraints but also because it was too early in the pandemic for the type of detailed information the assembly had heard on other themes to be available. Instead the assembly heard one presentation from the Expert Leads[2] that provided a series of think points for the assembly to discuss.

The assembly then considered three questions:

1. **Whether or not steps taken by the government to help the economy recover should be designed to help achieve net zero;**

2. **As lockdown eases, whether or not government, employers and/or others should take steps to encourage lifestyles to change to be more compatible with reaching net zero;**

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2   The content of the presentation was agreed by all four Expert Leads. It was given by Chris Stark, Committee on Climate Change (informant). An 'informant' is a speaker who we asked to cover the range of views and available evidence on a topic. As with all speakers' presentations to the assembly, a video of the presentation is available at climateassembly.uk/resources/, alongside the accompanying slides and transcript.

3. **Whether or not Covid-19 and the lockdown had made them think or feel differently about how the UK should get to net zero.** The assembly looked at this last question both in general terms, and in relation to the themes on which they had reached decisions prior to lockdown – 'how we travel', 'in the home', 'what we eat and how we use the land', and 'what we buy'.[3] After their discussions, they voted by secret ballot.

Assembly members' views on these questions are significant. There is no other group that is at once representative of the UK population, and well-acquainted with the sorts of measures required to reach net zero.

The assembly's interim briefing and what this chapter includes

On 23rd June 2020 Climate Assembly UK released an interim briefing covering some of its recommendations on *Covid-19, recovery and the path to net zero* in advance of Government announcements on these issues. These recommendations contributed to the Committee on Climate Change's (CCC) Annual Progress Report to Parliament later the same month.[4] The report presented the CCC's advice to Parliament and Government about how the economic recovery from the pandemic can be made compatible with net zero.

Part A of this chapter reproduces this interim briefing, which covered the assembly's views on steps that should or should not be taken around the recovery from Covid-19.

Part B moves on to look at whether or not Covid-19 and the lockdown have made assembly members think or feel differently about how the UK should get to net zero.

Both sections start with the relevant vote results. They then move on to look at the reasons assembly members' gave for their views.

Contents of this chapter

3   Assembly members looked at 'where our electricity comes from' and 'removing greenhouse gases from the atmosphere' after lockdown started.
4   Committee on Climate (2020). Reducing UK emissions: 2020 Progress Report to Parliament.

A. The recovery

Assembly members discussed two questions linked to the recovery from Covid-19:

■   Whether or not steps taken by the government to help the economy recover should be designed to help achieve net zero;

■   As lockdown eases, whether or not government, employers and/or others should take steps to encourage lifestyles to change to be more compatible with reaching net zero.

After their discussions, they voted by secret ballot.

A.1 Vote results

Assembly members took part in two different votes.

Figure 1

"Steps taken by the government to help the economy recover should be designed to help achieve net zero" (%)

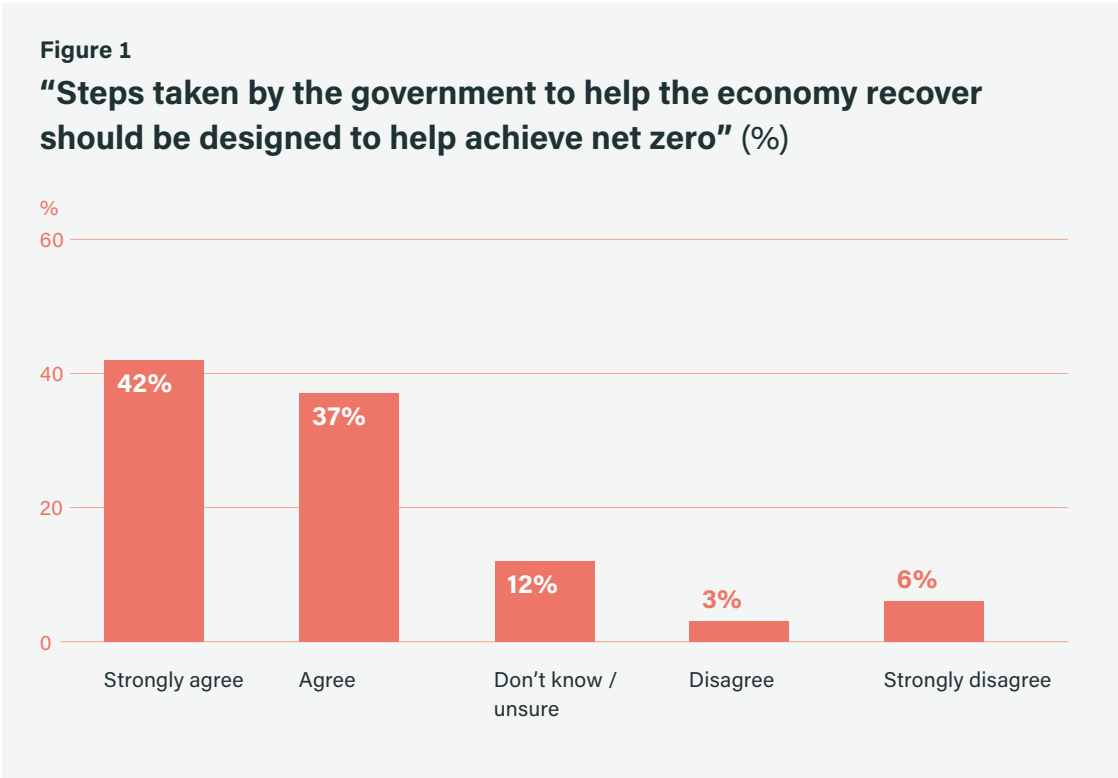|				
42%	37%	12%	3%	6%
Strongly agree	Agree	Don't know / unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree

Figure 2

"As lockdown eases, government, employers and/or others should take steps to encourage lifestyles to change to be more compatible with reaching net zero" (%)

Strongly agree	54%
Agree	39%
Don't know / unsure	3%
Disagree	3%
Strongly disagree	1%

A large majority of assembly members (79%) 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' that 'steps taken by the government to help the economy recover should be designed to help achieve net zero'; 9% 'strongly disagreed' or 'disagreed'; 12% chose 'don't know / unsure'.

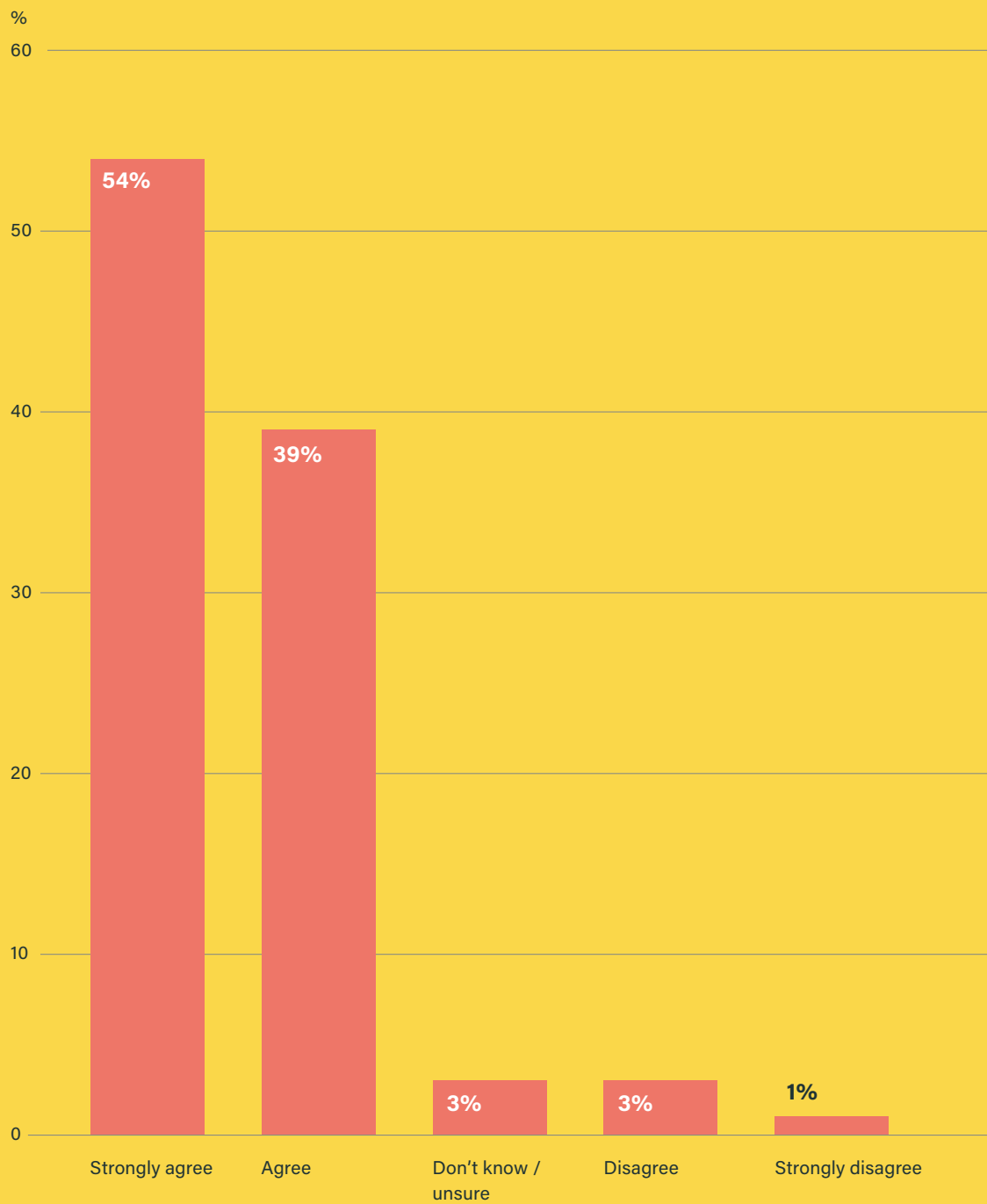A large majority (93%) also 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' that 'as lockdown eases, government, employers and/or others should take steps to encourage lifestyles to change to be more compatible with reaching net zero (see the graph on the next page); 4% 'strongly disagreed' or 'disagreed'.

A.2 Rationale

Assembly members' discussions prior to the vote shed light on the rationale behind their decisions, as do comments from their ballot papers. The results of the votes (above) show their final decisions.
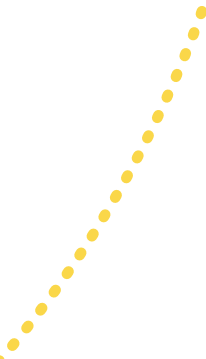
A.2.1 Steps to help the economy recover

Assembly members started by discussing 'whether or not steps taken by the government to help the economy recover should be designed to help achieve net zero.' We have grouped their comments under seven headings, for ease of navigation.

Limiting or putting conditions on investment in high carbon industries

The idea most frequently mentioned by assembly members was limits to, or conditions on, investment in high carbon industries. Views included:

> "Any money spent bailing out dying fossil fuel industries (the aviation industry, north sea oil) is money wasted on industries that won't survive anyway."

> "I don't think oil or gas companies should be given bailouts, you're wanting to stop them anyway, so why support them – support the people who work for them but not the companies – that's because they aren't compatible with net zero."

> "Shouldn't actively fund the worst offenders."

66 Yes opportunity to apply some pressure to industry and incentives must not prop up old systems."

66 [Provide an] incentive to manufacturers to go into green products, minimal support if not green."

66 Net zero should be one of the things that the Government is looking at for the economic recovery, alongside other things. For example, when negotiating bail outs or investment, ask for companies' carbon footprint or put in place net zero requirements."

66 Depends on what big industries survive this – they're going to ask for a lot of money. Government shouldn't give it too easily. Should have conditions which are green related along with any bailout. Air France agreed to climate change regulation – that's a good way to do it. One condition would be to get industry to invest in particular technology."

66 It would be too easy to just carry on as before and to take advantage of cheap oil and other special offers e.g. cheap travel, cheap clothes, factories churning out cheap goods to 'get the economy going'. We need incentives to reduce emissions, to improve [the] quality and longevity of products. We need penalties for people who do not consider the environment when building or rebuilding businesses."

66 Assist companies who provide climate enhancing services and not climate harming services."

Some assembly members disagreed with the above or added caveats. For example:

66 Where strings can be attached, do. But…support the economy in areas which lose jobs, like should have happened with the coal mines."

66 Retraining is important."

66 Some worry about highly trained people … aviation: how are they going to find jobs."

66 You may have to bail out some industries that are less green in the short term, so that you can invest in greener areas in the longer term."

66 It [helping to get to net zero] should be a factor but not the be all and end all. To rule something out just because it doesn't help net zero is too extreme – e.g. letting airlines go to the wall."

66 All industries have a right to succeed and people have a right to be employed."

66 Bailouts may be a necessary evil otherwise the economy will fail. We need to support what we have in order to survive."

66 Some fossil fuel sectors bring in a lot of money so it's hard not to support them."

66 Bail outs are helpful for small business."

66 Concern about knock-on effects on supply chains – airports etc."

Some assembly members made different but related points, for example:

66 Avoiding lock in of fossil fuel use [is] key – best chance to do this is now to avoid going back into the trap of fossil fuels again. That would be disappointing."

66 Because oil is cheap – put a tax on oil."

Rethinking and investing in infrastructure

One of the most frequently made points related to rethinking and investing in infrastructure. Some comments here were general, for example:

> This is an opportunity to rethink infrastructure practically and in a net zero friendly [way]."

> Government must steer in the right direction, with the right objectives – after emergency, focus is on infrastructure. So this is a prime time for Government action, and for the right investment in the right places."

Others noted more specific ideas – for example, around building insulation, offshore wind, e-vehicles and related infrastructure, broadband, cycling, solar for new builds, safer public transport (e.g. "taxis that have screens and hygiene security'), batteries for energy storage and online libraries to facilitate home study. A small number of assembly members mentioned types of infrastructure where they would not want to see investment – for example "less road building", "no new airport runways."

Supporting low carbon industries

Some assembly members said they would like to see investment in low carbon industries. Overlapping with the points made about infrastructure, assembly members mentioned sectors including the renewables industries (e.g. "Government should bring back incentives for renewables"), "development and deployment" of electric vehicles (e.g. "make them cheaper but allow people choice"), and heat pumps. Other related points included:

> If people [members of the public] are shorter of money they're not going to be able to do that [invest in steps that help get to net zero]. Interest free loans? Costs coming down?"

> Feels [like] government should bail out companies with green plans, and in turn their taxes will fund the government."

Reaching net zero is an economic opportunity

Some assembly members suggested that there are economic opportunities on the path to net zero. Views included:

> It's not an either-or matter [economy – climate change] can spend on technologies like wind turbines, for example, that provide jobs and help the economy to recover."

> Investing public money – everything we do in terms of net zero has got to be approached from an economic point of view i.e. it needs also to help bring money into the country as much as help to reach the net zero target – and this is possible in spending on projects such as renewable technologies and being able to 'export' the knowledge and technology to others."

> It's an opportunity to encourage new businesses, kick start with renewable energy businesses to get to net zero."

> Use this to our benefit – mix together economic recovery and achieving net zero to get what we need."

> " Yes – it's a perfect opportunity, create new work for job losses, new skills for example in turbine installing and manufacturing and make them in this country."

> " Any investment in things like wind turbines not only help us get to our net zero target, but it creates jobs and spends the money in the UK which gets money flowing in the economy and helps us both create jobs and increase demand side spending. This is a win/win situation."

> " We need a green industrial revolution."

Tackling Covid-19 and climate change together

On a similar theme to the last heading, some assembly members said they didn't feel a choice needed to be made between dealing with the current situation and meeting climate targets. Comments included:

> " Feels that climate change is as big a crisis as Covid-19, e.g. wild fires across the world, famine, air pollution. Don't want the government to put climate change on the back burner because of Covid-19."

> " With planning and a bit of structure we can tackle both climate and Covid-19. We shouldn't go back to where we were before."

> " Yes, we should integrate our recovery with green steps, because it's do-able."

> " Well it seems pretty silly to try [to] save the economy whilst shirking from problem solvers [albeit]…because of the costs. I understand we need to hopefully tackle this economic crisis, but it would make sense to incorporate both issues into one as we have made an agreement to hit net zero as that is beneficial for the future. I don't want to be known as a coward when faced with these issues, and bury my head in the sand. It just doesn't make the issues change or go away."

Others emphasised the continued importance of the net zero target, saying for example:

> " I am very concerned that the Covid-19 pandemic will push the net zero target further down the agenda of public policy and this should not be allowed to happen. Net zero should be at the forefront of the policy priorities going forward and should be woven in to each aspect of the recovery. The benefits of doing this (and the risks of not doing this) should be emphasised to the public at every opportunity so that individuals and employers … also make the best decisions when returning to 'normal' life."

Taking the opportunity for change

Some assembly members felt that the current economic challenges presented an opportunity to do things differently. Rationales included:

> " It's the way back – economy has to restart, government has an opportunity where people are waiting to get back to normal. There's not [an] other better time."

> " Biggest investments were made after the war (i.e. another time when economic recovery was needed) – fundamentally changed things e.g. education, health, housing. Massive investment but it was needed to push us in the right direction."

> The Government is being forced to think up the best way forward so [it] can incorporate new ways of thinking."

> The public is learning how to deal with change and we should take advantage of this developing attitude to introduce and enact the substantial changes that will be required."

> It's a good opportunity to try to change attitudes."

> There is a current public consciousness to climate change and people will be more accepting of change after an event which had such a devastating effect on the global economy and society."

Caveats, uncertainty and disagreement

Assembly members who chose 'unsure / don't know' in the vote, made the following points on their ballot papers:

> The government needs to get the economy back up and running. Climate change should not be put on back burner until [the] economy picks up. It should be addressed and preferably integrated into our recovery"

> In an ideal world yes. I am sure they will have to help business get back on their feet first."

> The country has to be successful for its citizens to thrive so this has to be balanced."

> This really depends on how long the current situation lasts and the state of the global economy when things improve."

Assembly members who 'disagreed' or 'strongly disagreed' that 'steps taken by the government to help the economy recover should be designed to help achieve net zero' made the following points on their ballot papers:

> Again, this will not happen as there is going to be a catastrophic depression that will change matters."

> This will only hinder the recovery."

> I do not think that [the] steps government takes to help the economy recover should be specifically designed to help achieve net zero. If support is needed and it does not meet the requirement of achieving net zero that should not mean it is disregarded. Many more factors should be considered when this decision is made."

> I think coronavirus is a real crisis, and the steps taken to deal with it have been severe. I am not convinced that the climate 'crisis' is in comparison a real crisis, and I think it is in many ways a confected crisis. I do not think the science is 'settled' with regards to the impacts of man, and our increasing CO_2 emissions on the global climate, although I do believe we each have a personal responsibility to live our lives as sustainably as possible. In this regard, I do believe the government can play a role, and positively encourage us to take personal responsibility to live our lives more sustainably. In addition, I think we have to be realistic on what as a nation we can achieve. As far as the UK is concerned, we only contribute around 1% of global CO_2 emissions, so the priority should probably be on rebuilding our economy post coronavirus, as opposed to inflecting greater economic self harm through expensive green initiatives, that will have negligible benefit."

Five assembly members who 'agreed' that steps taken by the government to help the economy recover should be designed to help achieve net zero noted **caveats** on their ballot papers too. These assembly members said:

> " Balancing action – there will be a need to formulate a path that will aid the economic recovery."

> " Agree, but possible to over-do it. A balance needs to be kept."

> " …but not in any way that risks the recovery."

> " Obviously there should be a focus on balancing the budget and reducing the deficit first. Keeping interest rates low to not crowd out private industry and to try and restore jobs lost. The government should initially encourage a market-led approach in this time with changes to regulation and after recovery focus on government led infrastructure projects."

> " If the opportunity arises to help the economy recover and also to achieve net zero, then the government should take it. However as the country is likely to be in a difficult financial position, it should think carefully before investing in anything and ensure the results will be beneficial."

Some assembly members also raised caveats during discussions. For example:

> " We're not a nanny state, government shouldn't tell us what to do. But incentive should be there, just not dictating."

> "Personal responsibility is key."

> " Feels economy will get much worse before it gets better. There's so much uncertainty around Covid-19 and still need to wait and see."

> " Not keen on big schemes right now as they may not be used a lot after this is over."

A.2.2 Steps to encourage lifestyles to change

Assembly members discussed what should happen as lockdown eases. Specifically they considered whether or not 'government, employers and/or others should take steps to encourage lifestyles to change to be more compatible with reaching net zero'. We have grouped their comments under six headings, for ease of navigation.

Encouraging homeworking

Homeworking was one of the most commonly mentioned themes. Assembly members' views included:

> " Homeworking is brilliant – less traffic, less flights, quicker – government has to encourage it somehow either with incentives or penalties."

> " As employers have adapted by helping workers to work from home where possible I feel this should be encouraged."

> For people who can work from home, and have been able to demonstrate that they can still be productive, companies will be more willing to allow this to continue, and this will reduce the volume of traffic / emissions on our roads. The government could send encouraging messages in this regard."

> I think especially for businesses they can encourage lifestyle changes through working from home and therefore less commuting. This would help with a reduction in driving and surface transport. It may also mean office spaces can be smaller and therefore businesses will be less polluting in the resources they use."

> Companies could have smaller offices, smaller heating, air conditioning and energy bills. They could use these savings to give extra benefits and incentives to their employees to help insulate and heat their homes and pay for the changes that may be needed to reach net zero. This could be a tax free Government backed initiative."

> I don't think it should be forced. No one should tell people what to do, or never to go back to work, but I think people should have the options to work from home and travel less."

> The lockdown has proven that in the modern world work doesn't have to fit such a robust schedule, particularly in white collar jobs. It is very very possible to continue a remote working world to permanently ease congestion and improve life quality."

> Homeworking should be encouraged: saves time, less commuting; businesses having seen it is possible; it won't be hard for people to adapt to; I'll be able to get a dog!"

Encouraging changes to how we travel

Assembly members also frequently mentioned changes to how we travel, particularly in relation to: (1) encouraging and incentivising cycling, making it safer and providing proper infrastructure; (2) a reduced need for business travel, particularly flying. Assembly members' views included:

> People should be encouraged to continue walking, running or cycling every day, and this hopefully would cut down on the use of cars for short journeys."

> This will require the government and employers to work together to ensure that everyone can go about their lives safely. This will mean massive investments in bicycle networks and walkable city streets. This will allow people to move safely, as well as lead to a healthier population and workforce who will be better able to fight the virus."

> Cycle to Work scheme is for health and the environment. Yes, the government should do things. There's a mandate to do so. They can't use [the idea that we won't listen] as an excuse now, people do listen, especially if the incentives are good."

> …government should encourage businesses to consider remote video calls/working rather than regular domestic / international business flights, which they'll probably begin to do anyway as in the future it may not make financial sense to fly in the way they have been doing before (less airlines operating means less choice, means potentially higher costs)…"

> I think that an employer or the government might look at video conferencing rather than flying or staying overnight in a hotel as a cheaper option which might also help climate change. This should be encouraged if it will also help in reaching net zero."

> " It would be a missed opportunity for the government, employers and individuals [to] not take advantage of our aim to achieve net zero as lockdown eases. Everyone has had to adapt to a different lifestyle and certain elements of the lockdown – travelling by land and air – should see a permanent reduction if we change our working practices and how often we really need to take flights."

Taking the opportunity for change

Assembly members recognised that Covid-19 has created a "tough and sad time" and several have been severely personally affected. They did however also note an "opportunity" for change in both lifestyles and how the economy works. Assembly members who voted 'strongly agree' made this type of comment frequently:

> " There is a great opportunity to restart the economy on a greener pathway and such chances should be seized upon."

> " Because there is going to have to be big changes for the economy to recover and if we can tie net zero aims into everything that happens on this then it is a great opportunity"

> " A huge mind-set change has occurred. This is an ideal opportunity to incorporate the assumption that any changes implemented should be compatible with n[et] zero."

> " Change has already begun which is a first step and can be built on."

> " Now is the time when people are ready to adapt. It's harder to get people to adapt when they are stuck in their ways."

> " People have seen how it is not that difficult to make simple changes like work from home more often so this is the best opportunity to introduce changes that will help us reach net zero."

> " We have momentum, there is an opportunity to change things for the better during this time of adjustment and flux. This is a window that we must use before people become weary of more change and exhausted by further upheaval."

> " It's important that we utilize this period of transition and inactivity in certain sectors to reinvent the way our country functions in order to make it more environmentally friendly."

Some assembly members also described the current situation as a "huge wakeup call." Related comments included:

> " Covid-19 has been a salutary warning that homo sapiens are not in total control of the environment and are not omniscient."

> " Think it [net zero] should be at the centre of government policy. It's about flexibility – you need to be prepared for things that are looming. We should start early and make the most of the momentum."

Others said "it's the only way to achieve net zero", "it's better for everyone if we embrace it", or asked "why on earth wouldn't they."

Providing leadership and information

Many assembly members also made suggestions about roles. In terms of the **Government's role**, comments included:

> " Has to be an onus to do this – some businesses will change, but many will be focused on the bottom line. Has to come from the Government, plus people power / public support. A quiet revolution."

> " Government needs to shape the narrative."

> " Government are going to have the largest impact on people's lifestyle, so they need to take the lead. And they are the ones who can invest in new ways of doing things to stimulate demand for it."

> " The government needs to start somewhere – a mix of government and private investment beyond us just all doing our bit."

> " This is an opportunity to get people to change, and it is important for government to lead that change."

> " That's why we have government! We expect them to guide us. I hope they'll learn from the pandemic."

Some assembly members also made comments about **information provision**, for example:

> " Government could communicate with every household the way they've done with coronavirus."

> " Government should inform all households of ways to change lifestyles to aid [the] environment."

> " The coronavirus crisis has shown that the public will respond to changes if they have sound, clear and trustworthy information and explanation as provided by our scientific advisers throughout the epidemic."

> " Employers can reduce overheads by people working from home (and meeting from home instead of flying round the world), and the government should build on people's experience of being advised by regularly promoting this message."

Assembly members also talked about the **role of businesses.** Some suggested changes that businesses could make, for example "provid[ing] incentives to work from home" or "provid[ing] showers/changing rooms so people can cycle to work and tidy themselves up afterwards." Others suggested that change was in businesses' interests because they "will want to reduce overheads" or because they "already value their environmental reputation." Some felt that change is already underway:

> " Experience is that all talk between [the] business and [the] trade union is about how [they are] going to do things differently around this."

Others said there "is no reason not to when they have been able to manage so far e.g. less business travel, more homeworking" or that "even if 30% of businesses make a change, it could make a difference." Some suggested that there is a need for government to incentivise change

or an "opportunity for government to advertise to business [the] benefits of being greener e.g. reducing travel."

Some assembly members said that we "need to concentrate on **local change,** as well as national" or that "Government should [take steps to encourage lifestyle change], and local authorities too. People did take notice [during the lockdown] so they do have influence and people will listen [to them]."

Points made less frequently

Points made by smaller numbers of assembly members included the following.

Encouraging healthier lifestyles

Some assembly members felt that steps should be taken to encourage healthier lifestyles, with some noting that conditions like diabetes and obesity put people more at risk from Covid-19. These comments tended to focus either on transport – for example "encourage walking / cycling which is good for the public health where it is possible to do so" – or diets:

> " Now is a really good chance to tie-in the way we eat with net zero, obesity etc, prevalence of take-aways, how badly we eat in this country, how much we waste."

Supporting individual choice and differing needs

Some assembly members talked about the importance of allowing individual choice and catering for different needs. Comments included:

> " Leading by example but the reality is that it's in an individual's choice – to follow or not – giving the opportunity to help individuals to make the right choice by providing all the information / resources to make those choices."

> 66 How changes are introduced is key and need to find a balanced approach that recognises the needs of different people – cannot be one size fits all."

> 66 Feel like there'll be two halves – those who are able to make these changes to how they work (conference calling etc and this will also open up job opportunities for those who otherwise would not be able to – physical limitations) and then there are those whose lives are linked to social interaction e.g. a yoga teacher who needs to interact with their participants, or teachers in schools – hard to socially distance in these settings. Or for those for whom social interaction is important for their mental health and wellbeing. These sorts of circumstances will have a bearing on how people change or not. Needs an awful lot of thought to what is possible or not possible and both have to be solved mutually – one cannot be to the detriment of the other."

> 66 These should only be suggestions, and incentives to encourage a lower carbon footprint."

One assembly member said that change should be "encouraged yes, forced no."

Providing incentives

Some assembly members said there should "100%…be incentives/penalties – people won't do things just by themselves. If everyone is doing it then people will do it – if it's clear for people to follow." Similar comments included:

> 66 Need incentives to encourage people to do the right things – what's in it for them?"

> 66 But will have 'to bribe people' e.g. enhanced bike to work schemes and make it really obvious and easy."

> 66 Many people want to change but will be carried along by others who do not understand or who are not aware of the impending problems."

Promoting green industry and jobs

Some assembly members suggested this is a "great opportunity to push green industries, new industries – focus on these in the future and not go back to dying industries. And for those who have lost jobs provide the means to re-train and gain jobs in these areas." Others mentioned specific industries that they would like to see supported, or suggested that "if businesses [are] not green then government should not help them but find other ways for people to be employed."

Disagreement, uncertainty and caveats

A small number of assembly members **disagreed or strongly disagreed** that 'government, employers and others should take steps as lockdown eases to encourage lifestyles to change to be more compatible with reaching net zero.' These assembly members said we need to "make plans for long term changes", that "we have come out of "Total Lock-Down' too soon" or that it "will not be foremost in their [government, employers] expectations." Some assembly members also felt strongly that it was too early to be discussing what should happen next at this stage of the pandemic.

Assembly members who voted **"don't know / unsure"** said:

> 66 At the moment the focus will be on tackling the virus and finding a vaccine. As we regain control though, the government should assess and plan what changes need to take place."

> It is very difficult to say if governments, employers or others should change as it depends on how they were acting before and governments and employers don't necessarily have the same opportunities to make changes."

> This really depends on how long the current situation lasts and the state of the global economy when things improve."

Assembly members who agreed that government, employers and others should take steps to encourage lifestyles to change also had **some caveats**. Individual assembly members said they "agree, but possible to over-do it. A balance needs to be kept" or "only where it makes economic sense. The economy must take priority over the global CO_2 agenda." Other individuals said it "should not affect reductions in people's incomes" or that we need to "be careful how we do it because the economy is in rough shape. Unemployment needs addressing in the short term."

Conclusions – the recovery

A large majority of assembly members (79%) 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' that 'steps taken by the government to help the economy recover should be designed to help achieve net zero'. When giving their rationale, assembly members most frequently recommended that the government:
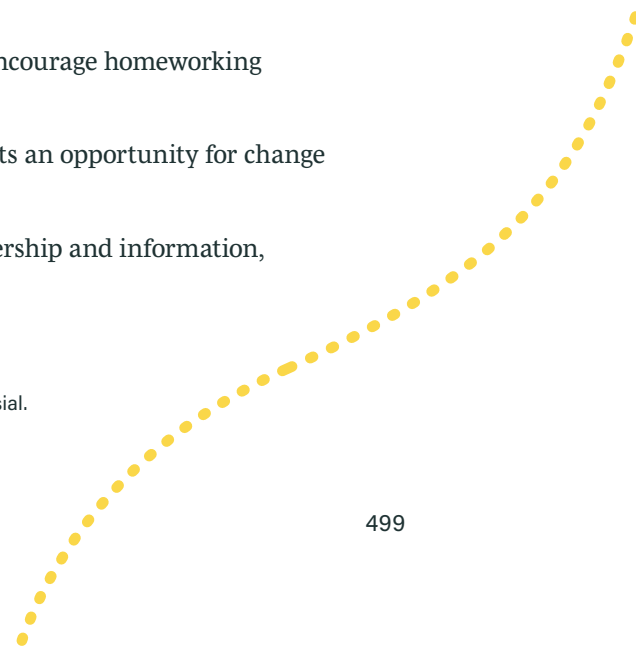
- Limit, or put conditions on, investment in high carbon industries;[5]

- Rethink and invest in infrastructure;

- Support low carbon industries;

- Make the most of the economic opportunities presented by the path to net zero;

- Deal with Covid-19 and climate change together where possible;

- Take advantage of the current opportunities for change.

Assembly members who were unsure or who disagreed with the statement tended to emphasise a need to focus on economic recovery first and foremost.

Another large majority (93%) of assembly members 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' that, 'as lockdown eases, government, employers and/or others should take steps to encourage lifestyles to change to be more compatible with reaching net zero'. Assembly members' rationale included:

- A desire for government, employers and/or others to encourage homeworking and changes to how we travel;

- A feeling that the current "tough and sad time" presents an opportunity for change that should be taken;

- A suggestion that the government should provide leadership and information, alongside roles for business and local areas.

5   This was both the most frequently given rationale and the most controversial.
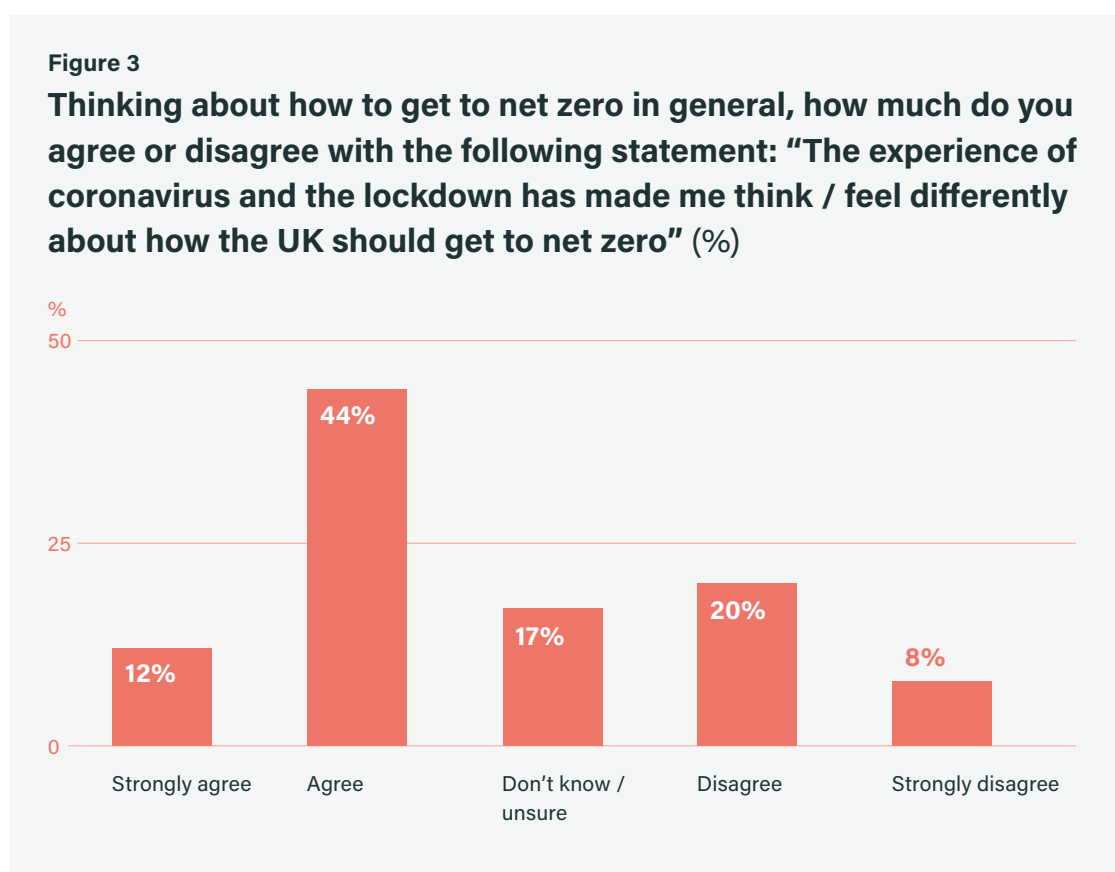
B. Impact on the assembly's thinking

In the second half of their discussions, assembly members considered **whether or not Covid-19 and the lockdown had made them think or feel differently about how the UK should get to net zero**, **and why**. Assembly members discussed this question:

- In general;
- For the themes on which they had reached decisions prior to lockdown – 'how we travel', 'in the home', 'what we eat and how we use the land', and 'what we buy'.

After their discussions, they voted by secret ballot.

B.1 Vote results

Assembly members took part in four different votes.[6]

Figure 3

Thinking about how to get to net zero in general, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The experience of coronavirus and the lockdown has made me think / feel differently about how the UK should get to net zero" (%)

6   All assembly members took part in the vote about whether Covid-19 and the lockdown had made them think or feel differently about how the UK should get to net zero *in general*. For the other three votes, just the assembly members who had looked at the relevant theme in detail participated. So, for example, only those who had examined 'in the home' in-depth voted on whether their views on heat and energy use in the home had changed.

Figure 4

Thinking about how we travel, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The experience of coronavirus and the lockdown has made me think / feel differently about how the UK should get to net zero" (%)

%

60	
40	30% 43%
20	8% 14% 5%
0	

Strongly agree	Agree	Don't know / unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree

Figure 5

Thinking about heat and energy use in the home, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The experience of coronavirus and the lockdown has made me think / feel differently about how the UK should get to net zero" (%)
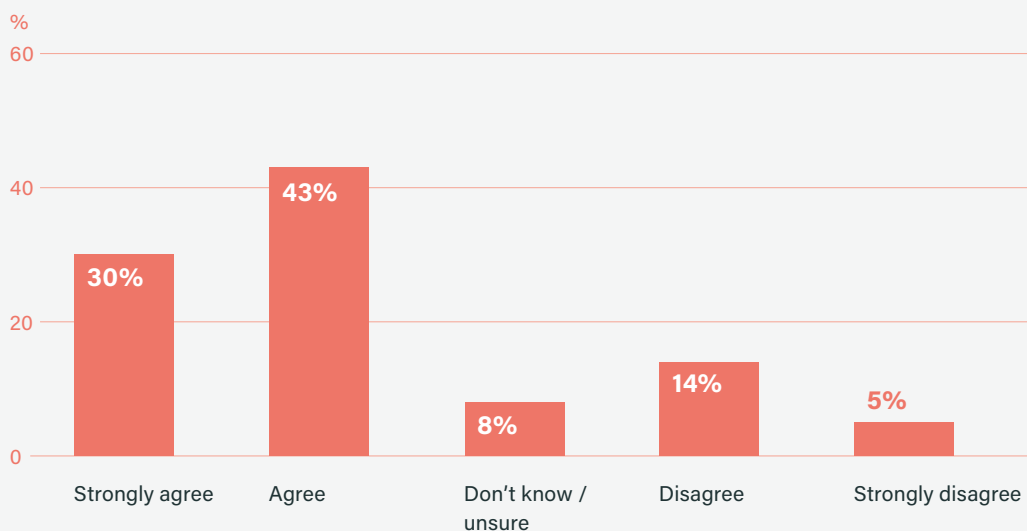
%

30	29% 29%
	26%
20	
10	6% 10%
0	

Strongly agree	Agree	Don't know / unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree

Figure 6

Thinking about food, farming and land use, and what we buy, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The experience of coronavirus and the lockdown has made me think / feel differently about how the UK should get to net zero" (%)
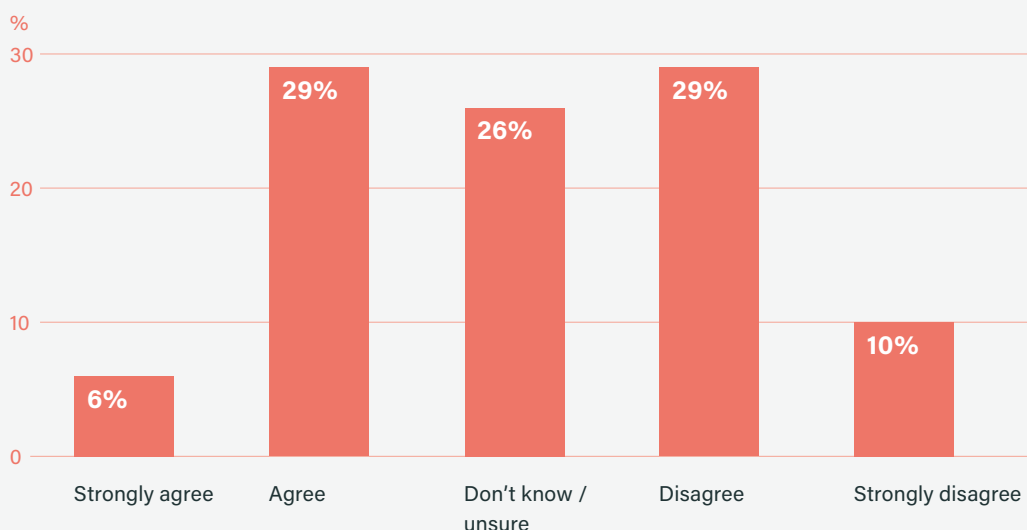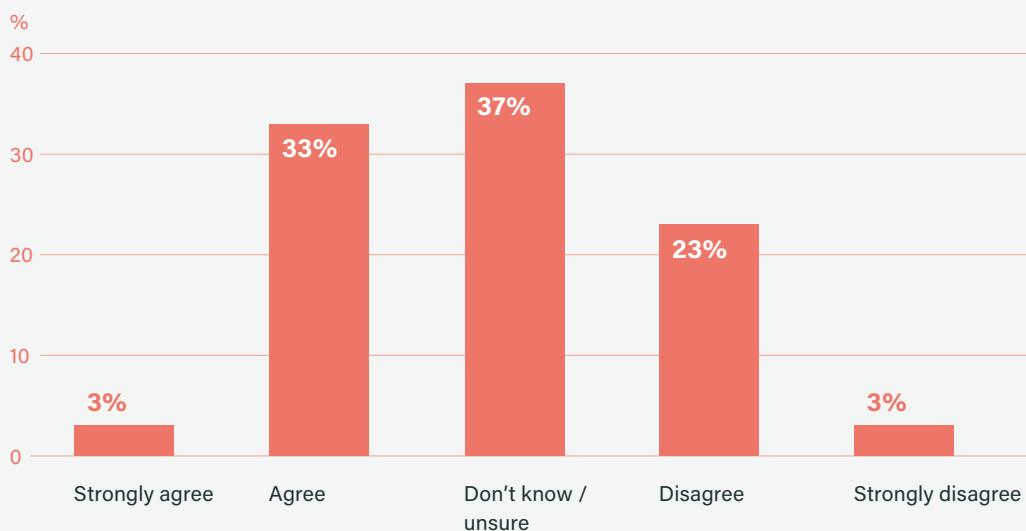

Assembly members tended to agree that Covid-19 and the lockdown had made them think or feel differently about the how the UK should get to net zero *in general*: 62% 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' that this was the case; 28% 'strongly disagreed' or 'disagreed'; the rest choose 'don't mind / unsure'.

However the impact on assembly members' thoughts and feelings varied by topic. The **biggest impact was on views about 'how we travel'**:

- 73% of the assembly members who looked at this topic said that Covid-19 and lockdown had changed their thoughts and feelings about the path to net zero in this area;

- 19% 'strongly disagreed' or 'disagreed' that this was the case;

For the other topics, a minority of assembly members said their thoughts and feelings had changed. Assembly members' views on heat and energy use '**in the home**' were the least affected:

- 35% of assembly members reported that their thoughts and feelings about the path to net zero for heat and energy use in the home had changed;

- 39% 'strongly disagreed' or 'disagreed';

- 26% said they 'didn't know' or were 'unsure';

For assembly members looking at **'what we eat and how we use the land'** and **'what we buy'**:

- 36% said their thoughts or feelings about how to get to net zero in these areas had changed;

- 26% 'strongly disagreed' or 'disagreed';

- 37% 'didn't know' or said they were 'unsure.

Across all the votes, **assembly members tended to avoid expressing 'strong' views,** choosing 'agree' or 'disagree' rather than 'strongly agree' or 'strongly disagree'. This may reflect the uncertainties and emerging nature of the current situation.

B.2 Rationale

Assembly members' discussions prior to the vote shed light on the rationale behind their decisons, as do comments from their ballot papers. The results of the votes (reported above) show assembly members' final decisions.

B.2.1 In general

Assembly members began by discussing ways in which their thoughts and feelings about how to get to net zero *in general* had or hadn't changed, and why.

⊙ Ways in which thoughts and feelings *had* changed, and why

We have divided assembly members' comments into ten overlapping categories to make them easier to navigate.

⊙ A wake-up call

Some assembly members said that Covid-19 "has been a bit of a wake-up call – we'd got complacent that bad things don't happen." Thoughts included:

"[I] realise it's much more important [now] – this catastrophe is easier to deal with than climate change."

"Learnt that delay is dangerous – it will hurt us if we do not act."

"Covid-19 has shown the old ways of thinking and doing things are not going to work anymore, and this has been a wake-up call that how we've been living isn't sustainable."

"Believe even more strongly that we need to do something and not be unprepared for the climate crisis."

Some assembly members highlighted the **visible changes to the environment that have happened during lockdown:**

> "Seeing how excited people have been about wildlife popping up in different places / dolphins in Venice – ... maybe this is a way of encouraging people to make the changes needed."

> "More obvious to me how much the environment is affected by emissions e.g. clear blue skies we've had. Even the clouds are brighter. The lack of traffic and cars."

> "Challenge to climate change deniers because climate change is usually invisible – but has now been made visible. So [we] need to carry on some of the changes."

⊛ An opportunity for change

Some assembly members talked about a sense of opportunity. Some assembly members made **general observations** saying "it's a great opportunity to grasp the nettle" or "it's an opportunity to shift." Comments included:

> "The world is going to be completely different, we just have to adapt and adjust – we cannot accept normal being as it was – this is an opportunity."

> "Covid-19 is an opportunity to start things in a completely different way, a fresh start, rather than going back to the way we've been operating before."

> "It's an opportunity for Government to move forward faster. Young people are talking about our environment; they are affected and they can see the difference. Mustn't go back to the way we were. Grasp the opportunity, take the good out of the bad. Keep people onside and bring them with you."

Some assembly members' comments were more specific:

"This is an opportunity to continue on with massive investment.... Introduce a climate emergency department that works closely with industry to develop new technologies/ approaches."

"Feasibility of large infrastructure has increased."

"Chance to redevelop the social structure in an environmentally friendly way."

"Opportunities to 'nudge' behaviour."

"We can incorporate green changes into our recovery from coronavirus. It doesn't necessarily require grand investments. Making small changes in our homes will be easier than changing the way we travel. Feel we should be making gradual steps anyway. The door has opened to this."

Some assembly members reported that they now "feel more **hopeful** [about tackling climate change]":

"Shows how quickly change can be implemented if there's a will. Has given hope that we can make quick changes. Feels like it might be possible to achieve net zero. Has made me feel more positive."

"Are [we] seeing the first shoots of a possible future world."

Others said that "significant change seems more likely" or that "totally unexpected things can happen."

⊕ What government can do

Some assembly members reported changed views about what government can do:

"Much more is possible now than what I had thought beforehand because it's shown that things can be done. Just seeing what the government has agreed to...."

"How quickly Government can act when needed – shows that change is possible."

"Ability of Government to act on scientific advice"

"There is a magic money tree."

"Government can make radical changes when necessary so maybe [they] need to make similar sweeping radical changes to the climate change agenda too. See climate change though the same lens as Covid-19 (an emergency). [I] feel it's far more realistic that we can begin making vast changes now; introduce them now as we've got used to a very different way of life anyway."

⊕ People's willingness to change

Some assembly members suggested that **"people have more willingness to change now"** or said they had had been surprised by people's willingness to change. Views included:

"Think [the] response from [the] public to [the] changes required to reduce emissions will be easier – they'll now be more open-minded to change."

"We're at a brink where we can change individually – think differently about what we need in our lives."

"It's made people reassess what is important."

"The lockdown will help with lifestyle changes: it's shown what is possible."

"People are willing to do things and the government is telling us what to do. People are more willing than I thought they would be."

Relatedly, some assembly members **talked about the role of information in making change possible:**

"Shows good leadership and information can make change happen."

"Shows [the] impact of top down messages."

"People will act differently if they know why"

"More important to make people aware of [the] impending climate crisis – [we] can work together if we feel threatened."

"Coronavirus – daily reports – crucial to do the same for climate change."

"It's more about reinforcement of the message/issue – media coverage – so much on Covid-19. [What] [i]f that model can be used for that level of coverage – e.g. daily carbon tracker on where we are in terms of heading towards net zero."

⊕ Lifestyle changes that have already happened

Some assembly members talked about **lifestyle changes that have already happened**, and suggested that they had altered their thoughts or feelings. Some focussed on **health** or **mental health**:

"The kids are really healthy."

"Kids are more relaxed, and love learning at home."

"Stress and mental health impacts of coronavirus, plus loss of jobs – siege mentality, building walls – will affect how we approach climate change / the society we live in when we tackle climate change."

"[We need] more focus on resourcing mental health support [around changes like this]."

"Can't see the grandparents in England; the lockdown has a very emotional and personal impact."

Some assembly members highlighted changes to **what we buy and how we buy it** as impacting on their views:

"Buying locally – farm shops are becoming popular."

"Shopped in local shops instead of supermarkets. Only used the car once a week. Don't want to use the car anymore. [...] You become smarter at doing things. Our overall consumption has been reduced. Not spending as much money at all."

"Shopping habits have changed and will stay (e.g. transition to once a week shop)."

"People have realised they don't have to go shopping every day and drive their car, although behaviour is already starting to revert back to what it was before lockdown."

"Focus more on children and schools, especially reducing what we want / buy – more urgent to do this now than before."

Some assembly members mentioned the influence of changes to **what we eat** or the **energy we use** on their thinking:

"People are more interested in food. This is linked to working from home. People used to go out to eat for lunch. There could be implications for healthy eating. We are eating lunches now as a family."

"It has been a good way to show people how to reduce their impact, for example not wasting food when making meals."

"People [are] at home and cooking more."

"We are using more gas and electric at home for cooking."

"We are using more electricity at home. We don't know what the future holds. There will be change, but not sure what exactly."

One assembly member said **"if this is how my lifestyle needs to change, then I don't want it."**

For a fuller discussion of assembly members' thoughts on these issues, please see:

- Section B.2.3 on heat and energy use in the home, page 520;
- Section B.2.4 on 'what we eat and how we use the land' and 'what we buy', page 524.

⊛ Commuting and homeworking

The most frequently mentioned way in which assembly members said their views had changed related to the shift from commuting to **homeworking**:

"Finding working from home doable and therefore flying, driving or trains for meetings [are] not necessary."

"Working at home is nice: we go for walks with the family. Let's fix the world! More clear that we need to sort everything out."

"Working from home could be implemented by a lot of companies."

> *"People and businesses have adapted to a new world, e.g. shown that we can work from home, e.g. twitter staff will now be working from home."*
>
> *"It has shown that working from home is more viable. It can support a transition to more homeworking."*
>
> *"Reducing emissions from commuting is important and people have been making compromises."*
>
> *"Views have changed: changes in transport behaviour [are] very good – reduction in emissions – thin[k] a lot of it will stick – people have more time now as well, not having to commute."*
>
> *"Coronavirus is going to be here for a long time, people will keep working from home – people might move out of cities as they're expensive ... – reduced congestion in cities...."*
>
> Some added that "there is a psychological impact currently, but take away the pandemic and working from home will be a positive change." Others said "companies will be able to save money on rental costs and energy bills" or that "Government should continue to push the message regarding working from home."

For a fuller discussion of assembly members' thoughts on these issues, please see Section B.2.2 on 'how we travel', page 514.

⊙ How we travel

> In addition to comments on homeworking, some assembly members talked about other aspects of how we travel and changes to their thoughts or feelings. Comments about **aviation** included:
>
> *"We can't fly. I would normally fly 3 times a year to go on holidays, but this lockdown has made me think about flying."*
>
> *"[I] feel a bit different to others. Feel this is going to be the death knell of the airline industry and probably public transport as well (not sure if people will use it to the same extent as before due to on-going concerns of the impact of being in close proximity to others). [I] feel people will think climate change is a luxury, a nice to have, but actually we need to get the economy going in some way and pay off the debts that we've all racked up. So, I don't feel as positive as the others."*
>
> *"We were expecting airlines to pay for new technologies, but they may not be able to afford to invest in these technologies."*
>
> One assembly member who farms and owns holiday cottages noted that "bookings have gone through the roof – people holidaying in the UK, in the countryside in much greater numbers than in previous years." Others said that the "aviation industry will take years to recover, and people may end up holidaying in the UK."

On cars, some assembly members talked about the "impact of low petrol prices because the government won't want to increase taxes and people feel that the car is safer." Others said they were "worried that the government is telling us to use our cars" or said "it is important to reflect on the changes e.g car usage has come right down, which is great. We don't travel as much, but concerned about the next few months, especially when the weather turns bad, which will push people back into their cars." Some noted "reduced congestion" or said we should "aim to maintain the reduction in travel."

On **walking and cycling**, some assembly members talked about an "increase in cycling", "pedestrianisation of town / city centres" or a "heightened belief amongst people that there are alternatives – e.g. cycles, scooters, cycle lanes." Some cautioned that "in any alternatives, be aware of sectors of society that might be disadvantaged by that uplift (e.g. visually impaired people and electric scooters)."

Some assembly members said that they "now feel more strongly that we should invest in low CO_2 **public transport**", or that "more can be done now about travel – trains and changing how city centres are used." Others were more cautious, saying "I'm still keen on public transport, but re-evaluating now (worried about catching the virus)" or that the "pictures of London's buses are shocking – I'm worried about it spreading so will jump in a car."

For a fuller discussion of assembly members' thoughts on these issues, please see Section B.2.2 on 'how we travel', page 514.

⊕ New economic priorities and challenges

Some assembly members said that the economic implications of Covid-19 present **new challenges on the path to net zero:**

"Coronavirus is the most damaging economic thing post war. Debt will be astronomical. Not sure we can recover from it, so feeling more pessimistic about [our] ability to reduce emissions."

"The recession will have grave consequences for the climate."

"Funding will be a major problem – we could be set back 10 years."

"Biggest worry is how people are coping with this, e.g. my business is being affected. How are we going to construct the green infrastructure if supply-chain businesses fail?"

"Concern about how sustainable this is. How it will affect the economy, real issue of inflation – collapse of the pound. Currently we're ok as we're in the same boat as every other nation. [What will happen] [w]hen inflation starts kicking in and we can't afford the things we can at the moment."

Some assembly members said that they **now see reaching net zero as less of a priority**:

"Want to see things back as they were, so maybe net zero takes a back seat to people just needing to put food on the table."

"Perhaps we can only afford to take small steps towards net zero until we are back on our feet financially."

"This [the virus] is the priority now."

"People need to be able to survive short term first, then [we can] look at [the] bigger target of net zero, and look at opportunities there."

"It [net zero] may be harder to achieve as Government have other pressing problems. They will need to focus in other areas, rather than net zero."

Others suggested that "perhaps we need to **focus on net zero options that are cheap** in the short term and bring money back short term – e.g. direct air capture and storage [are] probably less feasible now." Some expressed "increased concerns about the finances and the finances of ideas that need more [money] – have we spent it all?"

⊘ Opportunities for a green recovery

Some assembly members suggested that the current situation presents a "chance to stimulate the economy through a **green revolution**":

"Economy has come to a standstill and now we're going to have to rebuild the economy and we've got a choice about how we re-build – can go back to the same as before or we can decide to invest more in wind turbines, large public infrastructure projects...."

"There are big financial implications. Where will the money come from? [...] They should find the money to fix the planet. Rewrite the economic system. Fix the world for good."

"Need to examine the way we run as an economy and how we work and manage our environmental impact."

Others said "we need to **invest in UK capacity, skills and industry** – we rely too much on China at present." Some felt "we need to be more creative to make it [reaching net zero] possible even if it might be slower and more difficult."

⊘ Areas mentioned less frequently

Smaller numbers of assembly members made a number of additional points.

→ **What we've learnt –** some assembly members wondered "how to take into account what we've learnt during this time", or said we "can't forget about this, so how do we remember – risk of sliding back to [the] old normal and doubling down." Others said "alternatives that have been used (during this period) have made an example for the future."

→ **How little effect the current situation has had on climate change –** some assembly members said they were "surprised at how little effect the current situation has had on climate change, so shows scale of challenge – do still need to make some changes even if little impact." Others said the "fact [there's] only [been a] 10% drop in emissions since coronavirus shows how big a change we need to make – huge task." Some reported being "a bit disheartened that the lockdown has not had such a big impact on climate change."

→ **International context and the UK's global role –** some assembly members said that the "UK has a huge opportunity hosting COP26[7] after this crisis and that would be [the] time that the UK has to show leadership." Others suggested "let's build global co-operation, although worry politics of self-interest will resurface" or that "because it's a worldwide thing – due to this circumstance – maybe everybody will be open to change e.g. being receptive to better ideas and international cooperation on air travel."

→ **Impacts on food supplies –** some assembly members suggested that "food prices will go up and there will be incentives to grow more at home. The idea of not having ferries to Europe is worrying for food supplies." Others agreed saying that "ferries are different [from other forms of transport] – they bring food. If they go bust food prices will go up." Some said "there is a realisation of food security being an issue [and that there] will be long-term consequences. Example of Japan in 1992 – they didn't import rice as they wanted to build food security – it drove up prices in [the] short-term – was seen as a matter of national security." Others queried "would food prices not go down as supermarkets create offers?"

→ **Views around specific policies –** some assembly members questioned "is nuclear still a good idea? Too unsafe/risky" or said that "carbon capture also seems too risky." Some said "we need incentives so businesses can move towards more energy efficient equipment."

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7   COP stands for Conference of the Parties. It is attended by countries that signed the 1994 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Recent COP meetings have focussed on the Paris agreement that was signed at COP21 in 2015. The Paris agreement aims to keep global warming to less than 2°C above pre-industrial revolution temperatures – and to pursue efforts to keep it below 1.5°C.

⊕ Concerns about discussing the implications of Covid-19

Three assembly members expressed concerns about discussing the implications of Covid-19 for reaching net zero:

"We don't know enough and the topic is too big. [...] Our conversation isn't evidence rich or grounded in science. We can't understand the impact of the decisions we're might make; we shouldn't make decisions during a pandemic. To have the assembly make a statement is very difficult."

"No-one knows what is going to happen."

"After the pandemic isn't a given, so using this group to plan doesn't make sense. What are the parameters for this conversation? Timelines and so on. Are we assuming the pandemic is going to last 3 months, 6 months or longer? It is very difficult to make recommendations without this – given that the longer the pandemic lasts the more impact it will have on the economy and therefore the more emphasis would need to be placed on the economy."

One of these assembly members went on to say:

"In my opinion the Citizens' Assembly is in no position to pass any comment on the 'implications' of coronavirus on climate change when so little is known about the long term full scale of the impact, suffering and hardships that coronavirus will have on peoples' lives. Failing to seek prior consensus from the Assembly as to whether the Assembly collectively wishes any statement to be made on its behalf linking net zero to coronavirus smacks of political hubris. At a time when lives are being lost and extraordinary sacrifices are being made at the height of a global pandemic is the Assembly seriously being asked to choose between deciding to fund the future NHS, social care, welfare and basic fabric of society vs net zero before the financial and social costs of the pandemic have even started to be felt? I refuse to be balloted on these rash, grossly naive and insensitive questions and I expect to see this response accurately conveyed to Parliament."

One of the three assembly members chose not to participate throughout the remainder of the discussions reported in this chapter.

Some assembly members noted ways in which the experience of Covid-19 and lockdown had *not* made them think or feel differently about how to get to net zero.

⊕ Ways in which thoughts and feelings *hadn't* changed, and why

⊕ General comments

Some assembly members made **general comments**, noting for example that it "hasn't really shifted [my] views", or that we are "happy with the decisions we came up with." Others noted that it "hasn't changed the requirement to reach net zero ... the goal is still the same" or that we "need to make changes, but [we] needed to make these anyway, e.g. travel."

⊕ Reinforcing existing views

Some assembly members said that **the crisis had emphasised the importance of views they already held, or provided evidence for them.** Comments included:

"Emphasised that future plans should be focussed on emission lowering (with carbon capture as a last resort)."

"It's still a huge issue that needs to be faced. Lock down is enforcing the point that it is a global crisis – climate change hasn't just stopped because of coronavirus."

"Always thought the government should lead the way and there's a precedent now. People will do what they say if they believe it's for the greater good."

"The fact that the coronavirus is now here has given us numbers to support the fact that we would like to have less vehicles on the road but I've always desired to have less vehicles on the road...."

"These are the options we discussed [earlier in the assembly] – travelling less etc. Just had to have a crisis to push us to do it."

"The current situation emphasises and reinforces that any dramatic government actions taken to achieve net zero must be well planned, not undertaken in a panic or a rush."

Some assembly members gave **specific examples of views that had stayed the same.** These included that "we still need to insulate and heat our homes better" and "views on wind farms." Several talked about their **unchanged view that achieving net zero will be difficult.** Some said that "hitting net zero was ambitious to start with", or that "even though emissions have dropped, it is still not enough." Others said that they "agree that things aren't going to go back to how they were, but don't feel any more positively about reaching net zero – question [of] if government will prioritise it, especially in a recession." Some said that "politicians lack imagination – likely to go back to how things were" or that "climate deniers [are] still likely to ignore the evidence." Some suggested that "public debt could be used as an excuse for inaction."

Others said their **views hadn't changed but that they had noted changes around them.** For example, one assembly member commented that "you can see the change in the air and I like the wildlife coming out". Another said my "view [has] not changed – [but we] have made good steps towards lifestyle change." Conversely some assembly members said their views had remained the same because these changes won't stick:

"Don't feel coronavirus will change things much – people will return to spending and the economy will bounce back."

"We are creatures of habit and [the] short term. Think many will go back to [the] same routine."

Some assembly members suggested it was **too soon to consider whether the current situation had made them think or feel differently.** Some said "it's too soon to ask this question – ask again in six month's time. There's still so much which is uncertain. Depends on how it goes." Others noted that "the economic impacts have yet to pan out" or that it's "very early days, not sure what's going to happen. Let's wait and see."

B.2.2 How we travel

Assembly members who had examined 'how we travel' during weekends two and three of the assembly next moved on to discuss the impact of Covid-19 and lockdown on their thoughts and feelings about this topic in particular. 73% said that their thoughts and feelings about how to get to net zero in terms of 'how we travel' had changed.

⊙ **Ways in which thoughts and feelings *had* changed, and why**

⊙ **Impacts on air travel**

Some assembly members said that "there is definitely going to be a reduction in air travel over a decade", that "people will be scared to travel by air", or that "we don't know what will happen. My instinct says that people will travel differently. There will be an enduring reluctance for people to travel on airlines." Some said "people aren't going to want to fly until there is a vaccine. This is good because there will be less emissions."

Others questioned "assuming this lasts for 18 months then is the airline industry going to recover? Budget market will disappear, because of the testing needed and people needing to be packed in. Even if the government says that it's safe, will people want to do recreational travel?"

Some predicted that "airlines will suffer and we will holiday less", asking "will airlines hike prices and expect we will just travel less frequently?" Some commented that "the cost of air fares is certain to go up. The cutthroat market is gone. A lot of volatility in the flight prices", or said a "lot of airlines are now in difficulty – are they going bust? There will be less airlines." One assembly member said "my parents [are] looking to travel to Hong Kong for August – they are being told they have to have 2m distance so most seats will be empty. How will airlines make money from less people? It is still really risky. No one will want to travel too soon." Some suggested that "there will be fewer planes but a bit resentful of that (when seeing planes for cargo) – but see there will be an impact on passenger confidence to fly."

One assembly member said "I am [now] more inclined to favour reduced travel by air…." Another commented:

> "I used to think that I needed to fly for holidays or to see family or for business, but I've now seen that we can make do with less flying. If we had of had the assembly meetings on air travel after the spread of coronavirus and the lockdown, I would have voted very differently for a solution that leads to less flying. Solutions I never would have imagined possible have now already happened. We don't need to wait to transition to a world with less flights. It's already here. Now we just need to invest in the alternatives."

⊕ Homeworking

Some assembly members felt that "Zoom may change the way people work", or reported that they were "finding working from home is doable – and there are other benefits such as spending time with kids." Others suggested there would be "less requirement for travel, Government should encourage home working even once a vaccine has been found." One said that "for many job sectors we now know we don't need to constantly move around to get work done, to go to meetings or even to catch up with friends." Others commented:

> "Working from home is going to be more acceptable. I thought it wouldn't work but I am doing it and it is working fine. [I had a] meeting with 8 people at work and 7 of the people on the meeting wanted to stay at home to work in the future."

> "My company had a strong work from the office culture and weren't prepared at the start of lockdown and people are surprised at how well it has worked."

> "Before Covid-19 I used to travel a lot for work – IT supporting GPs for the NHS. Now I do it mostly from home."

⊕ Broadband access

Some assembly members said that "there is a lack of investment in broadband by the Government, they need to provide better infrastructure and broadband. People have to have the choice [to work from home]." Others questioned how much lack of broadband access is an issue or said they choose not to have it.

⊕ Impacts on public transport

Some assembly members suggested that "we are going to struggle with public transport and more so with social distancing", that "it will have a detrimental impact on public transport usage" or that "people will not want to use public transport as much; people will want to drive; bus companies will go bankrupt because they won't be used as much." Some noted that "its going to be difficult to encourage more public transport but social distancing on public transport is not going to be profitable." Others said:

> "I'm scared to go on public transport. I feel a bit stuck – too far out of town to cycle. I love going on public transport but feel wary of it."

> "I am also worried about going on a bus. You never know how clean something is. I'll choose a car in future. You have to touch something on a bus. It took me longer to walk home. When will it be safe?"

> "The key question is when will we feel comfortable going on public transport. Even on pavements we have the ability to walk apart but you don't have this feeling on the bus or train. People are going to opt for Uber or driving."

Some suggested that "that feeling may well continue into the future – even when the virus is under control" or noted "same for trains. We never thought about it beforehand – but now we are sceptical."

Some felt there would be "less requirement to invest in public transport because of decreased use", while others had the opposite view saying "they will have to put on more buses to allow for social distancing." Some assembly members felt that impacts on public transport "will not be a permanent issue, once a vaccine has been found." One assembly member commented that "people mentioned the issues with traveling on public transport in an epidemic, but we must think sensibly… This [Covid-19] will not be more of a threat than climate change seems to be."

⊕ Walking and cycling

Some assembly members said that "people won't want to use public transport, so [the UK] will need to invest in electric cars and cycle and walking infrastructure." Some commented that "the [government's] 2 billion investment in cycling infrastructure will help" or suggested that "public spaces have now been adapted to encourage the public to change habits and consider walking/cycling more." One assembly member said that "I can envisage a lot more people cycling. People seem to be happier taking bikes out and walking. [There is] [t]alk of new infrastructure to accommodate cycling." Some expressed greater interest in electric bikes, with one assembly member commenting "I'd be more interested in [an] electric bike than sitting on a bus."

Some assembly members had a different view, suggesting that "measures such as widening public spaces are all well for good weather, but generally and more so in winter months [the] elderly / vulnerable are not going to use this, they'll need to use their cars or public transport – which need to be readily available and operated in a carbon neutral way – otherwise we'll be going back to existing ways and habits."

⊕ Progress on electrification

Continuing the above discussion, some assembly members expressed support for electric cars:

"I still feel cars are a very important part of our future, especially in the short term, so electrification of cars will have to be massively subsidised for the next few years."

"I am more inclined to favour … the expansion of electrically powered road transport."

"I was a very strong advocate for public transport, but being in an enclosed space with lots of other people seems a very likely way of spreading the virus, so I am leaning more favourably towards electric cars than I was before."

"People are very unwilling to use public transport and air travel now so we need to focus on improving electric cars and completely getting rid of diesel and petrol cars and also improve cycling infrastructure."

Some assembly members commented "electric buses in city centres – why not do [it] now." Some expressed an alternative view, saying "progress for electrification – electric car cost – maybe that won't get pushed forwards now."

⊕ Government ability to make change

Some assembly members said it shows that "prioritising what happens [is] in the gift of government", that "this pandemic has shown how Government CAN do something if it really wants to" or that "it has shown what we can do when forced to change ... the government has leverage and we can achieve things for the greater good [especially] ... when [we] work together." Others had a different perspective saying "it's not going to be as achievable, because of the impact on the economy. The Government will feel they can't shift their focus. This worries me. We are already behind other countries."

⊕ Scale of impact

Some assembly members said "it is going to have a mega impact" or that "life will change a lot because of the virus." One commented that "cleaner air and louder birdsong has had a profound effect on some of us."

Others felt that "this experience is going to change people's psyche towards travel" or asked "how will people act if they continue to hear that people are dying?"

Some assembly members disagreed saying "we'll get over it once there is a vaccine."

⊕ Speed of change

One assembly member said that "we can change even quicker than I originally thought possible." Another commented that "the opportunity to change and to see change quicker shouldn't be wasted by going back to how things were before Covid-19."

⊕ Other

Other comments included:

"How can governments make predictions to 2050 if they can't even make predictions about next year?"

"Appetite for buying from China / long distances will be reduced and [there will be] a push for manufacturing in the UK – looking for how things can be made in a greener way."

"The shift to public transport, bus subsidies, car share schemes, should be abandoned."

"More people are going to be travelling by car."

⊕ Ways in which thoughts and feelings *hadn't* changed, and why

⊕ Views that had stayed the same

Some assembly members noted views that had stayed the same despite Covid-19 and the lock down:

> *"Car/planes aren't the problem – fuel is the problem. And there are solutions available for this and that need to be developed and mass produced – solutions are out there...."*

> *"Still think that we should not just look at [the] impact of passengers flying but also at cargo and find other ways to transport goods ... and if prices go up for passengers [they] should also go up for cargo."*

> *"Still want to travel as much as I can on aeroplanes even if I realise that may take a time to come."*

> *"Due to Covid-19 [the] Government has been providing info every day to the public / organisations etc. Similarly [we] need a knowledge base for this [net zero] agenda that offers information / solutions on how to get to net zero that is shared and developed."*

⊕ Views not changed, but greater urgency

Some assembly members said they "...just feel it's more urgent to do it now – e.g. car charging points across the country – this is a massive job and will offer job creation." Others commented that "there is an opportunity and urgency to this and to take the lessons from the experience around Covid-19 and apply it to approaches to get to net zero."

⊕ Things will return to normal soon

One assembly member said "I think it will return to normal soon." Another commented:

> *"Through both weekends, a huge preference of improving public transport was revealed. While some members of my group today raised concerns that they don't feel confident about using public transport so soon and think the improvements should be pushed back and focused on [electric cars and] renewable energy production, I feel quite confident that society will return back to before coronavirus soon so I feel like I still agree with the push for improving the public transport infrastructure and electrifying it as well."*

> *"We are seeing today that the Peak District car parks are full – car travel will stay the same and we are selfish and want to be in control."*

⊕ Additional comments

One assembly member commented that "coronavirus has given us more time to think about things and appreciate what we can't have right now like freedom." Another commented:

> ❝ Using online conferencing (Zoom etc) increases the digital divide. […] Ease of use for most people, less travel (environmental costs reduced), save time (travel etc). But negative points are difficulties with global time differences, national holiday dates. [It also] [i]ncreases the gap with digital literacy and [the] economic divide (both between people, and countries)."

Some assembly members looking at 'in the home', 'what we buy' and 'what we eat and how we use the land' also made comments about how we travel:

- **Choice of workplace** – some assembly members predicted that "the workforce will be more trusted to work from home or work remotely. We need to think about remote working hubs too, so people can still have company but not travel so far. Some people find working from home hard, mentally." Others commented that "people need more choices and options – more localised offices would be good. Plus the choice to work from home, and incentivise it."

- **Some travel for work is still needed** – some assembly members commented that "the virus and lockdown allows companies and the government to weigh up car use, working from home and evaluate what does and doesn't make sense. 6–8 weeks is very different to the rest of your life. People can have mental health issues. Other industries could be wiped out e.g. office landlords. Building relationships by video conference is hard." Others agreed saying "we will still need to fly / meet people face to face, e.g. to build relationships for roles like sales."

- **Less travel is good** – one assembly member suggested that "spending more time in homes is better for CO_2 – [I] will fly and drive less and use solar and wind power more." Another reported that "seeing very few planes and having less road traffic has made for a more peaceful, healthy environment. You hear the birds better and the wildflowers are thriving."

- **Tackle air travel** – some assembly members said there is "more impetus to cut air travel now", that it's "more possible for businesses to use conference calls and to cut air travel", or that we should "tackle [the] disproportionate number of people taking [the] majority of flights – more important to do this now."

- **Travel on the land** – some assembly members suggested that we are "going backwards and relying on cars, e.g. getting out of [the] village for shopping and to see somewhere new for [the benefit of our] mental health." Others noted that "some people [are] still limited in travel options, e.g. from where they live. For example, they need public transport to get to work but can't with social distancing." Some commented that there is "more talk of promoting cycling now, but the problem is when [the] weather is bad – is cycling going to be feasible?"

- **Cost of oil** – one assembly member commented that "because oil has been so cheap recently, I know of many family / friends who have bought it in the last few weeks when they would not have done previously. I think an immediate change should be to increase the prices again (e.g. through taxation) to encourage more use of renewable resources and use the revenue from the tax to invest in renewables."

B.2.3 In the home

Assembly members who had examined heat and energy use in the home during weekends two and three of the assembly discussed the impact of Covid-19 and lockdown on their thoughts and feelings about the path to net zero for this topic. As reported in Section B.1 above, 35% said that their thoughts and feelings had changed; 39% said they hadn't and 26% didn't know or were unsure.

→ Ways in which thoughts and feelings *had* changed, and why

→ Greater awareness

Some assembly members suggested that the more people are at home, "the more people might feel the incentive to change electricity supply e.g. solar panels, or fitting insulation." Others agreed, saying "if you're in the home permanently [you] would be more aware of what energy you're using in the home" or that you "would think a lot more about it." Some said that "insulation and retrofitting is more in focus, as people have worked from home now and will see the usefulness of it more. For new build homes too." One assembly member commented that "spending more time in the home has made me think about how much energy I need to use due to poor insulation. With more people at home remote working it is important to make sure that we have innovative ways to reduce emissions and I'm now more interested in heat pumps as they are less disruptive in this time."

→ Implications around energy use and costs

Some assembly members said we are "using more electricity than [we] normally do", that "if we stay at home our homes are using more electricity especially if you have kids at home all the time", or that we are "using more energy in the home – spending more too." Some noted "concern that more power is being used in the home and the impact that may have on bills – this may need more government intervention to address fuel poverty." Individual assembly members commented:

"My own home is dark and cold. Before my husband started working from home, we didn't put the heating on during the day. Now he's here, we do. His office [i.e. where he works usually] is heated. This has put our costs up. What about an allowance from work to heat our home, or to make it more energy efficient?"

"The experience of lockdown has resulted in a lot more people being at home and working from home. If this trend is to be long-term then having a plan in place to re-fit old homes that aren't energy efficient will be more crucial than ever."

"From [a] purely personal point of view, I should not have put off the home insulation project. The last few weeks at home all day would have been warmer and cheaper! – and less CO_2 emitted from here. Delay costs money and the environment."

"*We are all using more energy in our homes during this crisis, and we are fast approaching summer. I am concerned that if this had been during the winter months, the effects on people's lives would've been much worse. With this in mind, it has highlighted the need for cheap reliable energy, and I do not want to see people's bills rise in order to pay for green initiatives. We already pay more to fund these green initiatives and I feel the subsidies should be removed.*"

⊛ Views on government action

Some assembly members said that changes "will be driven by industry and government – makes change more likely" or that "it hasn't changed my views on how to do it but it has demonstrated that it can be more 'doable' than I feared."

Some assembly members said that they now "feel this should be more of a common endeavour, not just the government doing stuff."

Financial and economic implications

Some assembly members said that "a lot has gone back to the drawing board, a lot of people have been financially very adversely affected" or that it will be "less feasible for home owners to upgrade homes – for next decade possibly – government action is essential." Others said that "people [are now] focused on keeping businesses going and getting debt paid off" or that there is "less money available to improve homes to become more energy efficient. Virus may delay reaching net zero. Worried government may not allocate sufficient funds to support this."

Some assembly members disagreed, commenting that "we have the wealth (using a global comparison) to do this despite current difficulties – and we should."

Changes to views on specific policies or technologies

Some assembly members said we should "maybe look more at home energy efficiency, e.g. [gas boiler] scrappage scheme – but more energy use in [the] home would be balanced by less office space." Others said they "wonder whether heat networks might be a less reliable source of power if lockdown conditions stay as there will be less industrial activity able to feed them."

Feel more strongly

One assembly member commented that it "made me more convinced of what needs doing." Another said "I feel even more strongly that we must make every effort we can to reduce emissions within the home and all the ways of doing this that we discussed and agreed on are even more important."

Shock

Some assembly members said that they were "shocked by the lack of impact [of lockdown] on climate change" or commented that "everyone has been shocked by what's happened with coronavirus."

Having work done while at home

Some assembly members said that "people won't want workmen in [their] home."

⊕ Ways in which thoughts and feelings *hadn't* changed, and why

⊕ No or very little change

Some assembly members said that Covid-19 and lockdown had made "no difference" to their views, or said that "not much has changed for me." One assembly member wrote that "I cannot see much changing in how we use energy in our homes except the high fixed costs of many methods may be more difficult for individuals to cover as disposable incomes fall during the recession. This would be another area where higher levels of government expenditure may be required to reach the net zero target. It will be interesting to see if this changes if some level of lockdown lasts over the winter months." Other individuals noted that "the 'in the home' topic was never really controversial so the solutions we came up with are relatively unchanged", or that "I still think the changes should be made and paid for and incentivised by government led initiatives."

⊕ Specific views unchanged

Some assembly members noted specific views that had stayed the same despite Covid-19 and lockdown. Some said that "homeowners were never going to pick up the bill – scale is massive, needs central funding" or that "government should be incentivising people to improve their homes with grants etc." Others re-emphasised the "benefits of solar panels" or said that "the building that has started again – needs to be energy efficient." Others commented that their "views in favour of hydrogen, regional heating systems etc haven't changed – just more urgency."

⊕ Haven't felt impact yet

Some assembly members said "it's been warm so I haven't had to put the heating on" or "we're now in summer, so no hardship being locked down. What will happen come winter, when household bills go up? Highlights the need for cheap energy."

⊕ Views haven't changed, but we have noticed changes

Some assembly members said they had noticed "more deliveries, increased use of [the] internet" or that "we are using more electricity." One assembly member commented:

> *"Think the impacts have been more to do with travel and air travel"*

B.2.4 'What we eat and how we use the land' & 'What we buy'

Assembly members who had examined 'what we eat and how we use the land' and 'what we buy' during weekends two and three of the assembly discussed the impact of Covid-19 and lockdown on their thoughts and feelings about these topics. As reported in Section B.1 above, 36% said that their thoughts and feelings had changed; 26% said they hadn't; 37% said they didn't know or were unsure.

⊕ Ways in which thoughts and feelings *had* changed, and why

⊕ Food security

Some assembly members said that "the UK is not a food secure country. 53% of our food is produced in the UK, 47% comes from elsewhere – imported, mainly from the EU." Some commented that "as countries come out of lockdown in different ways, importing food may be less doable – might grow more of our own." Others felt that the current situation "prompts [the] UK to be more independent with food – it's not sustainable to import to that extent – not just food, what else can we make here? Raises the question more pressingly that was already raised by net zero." Some queried "are we importing less food currently?" or said Covid-19 and lockdown "made [them] feel more strongly that we shouldn't be relying on imports."

⊕ Economic implications

Some assembly members expressed "concern that people are more worried about money at the moment." One commented, "I feel sorry for self-employed couples. Use their savings to get by. Wonder what the financial impacts of Covid-19 will be for many people?" Some assembly members predicted that "less disposable income will probably affect what people buy – maybe higher quality too – changing consumeristic attitudes." Some speculated that "meat use might reduce because it's more expensive." Some suggested that "having limited choices during the lockdown is a good example of what we could face with climate change. Good to see that we have been wasting less. We have planned the meals more. Saved money."

⊕ Buying locally and local produce

Some assembly members reported that they "have started buying more locally, trying to get things not imported. Altered shopping habits. Enjoyed doing it because [we] felt [we were] supporting local businesses." Other said they had "noticed people are using local produce more, even if it might be a bit more expensive (especially if they deliver). Used to be lots of people going to [the] supermarket. But because of queues etc, that's lessened and more uptake in local buying." Some assembly members disagreed saying the "uptake in local buying isn't the same everywhere – some places still shop at the supermarket because it's the cheapest."

⊕ Behaviour change

One assembly member commented that "consumer behaviours that I wouldn't have expected before I now believe are much more likely to happen (e.g. reusing products) so this effects the incentives required to change people's behaviours." Others noted that "people are sharing more – giving stuff to each other, or reduced rates for key workers, doing each others' shopping – will that attitude continue? Could help with emissions – stronger community spirit."

⊕ Change will be easier and is more important

One assembly member said "I think it'll be easier as long as we keep the momentum and use what we are learning now from this going forward." Another commented that "if anything they [the recommendations] are more important now than ever and would be even easier accepted. Very very important [that] diary farmers ... get a fair price for milk .... They were being squeezed by the big 4 supermarkets. They deserve a fair price for their products." Other individuals suggested that "just introducing change may be easier as change is already happening" or that "this is a once in a lifetime opportunity to asses what we eat, what we actually need and food supply chain processes. Also transport options can be addressed for future environment targets."

⊕ Other comments

Other comments included:

"People feel closer to nature – more appreciative of our land. We've started looking round and found what matters. Rewilding and respecting nature has gone up in priority."

"Getting people back to work and kick-starting a failing economy must be a priority."

⊕ Ways in which thoughts and feelings *hadn't* changed, and why

⊕ Our recommendations still stand

Some assembly members recorded a "consensus amongst the group that all the points made by assembly members [about food, farming and land use] are still relevant. How do you use the land better? How to use more renewable energy? The whole subject is common sense." Others said they "stand by the principles [previously agreed]: change is still needed" or that "everything that was decided in the Assembly is important. We know it is still important. Covid-19 has made it even more important." Some groups reported that it is "not clear that views have changed in any substantial way."

Some assembly members said differences between pre- and post-lockdown were "more about how things have changed rather than [that] views have changed." Some said that "food costs have gone up (oranges)", that "getting Polish food has become more difficult – miss it", or that "in general consumption patterns haven't changed – just things like not getting a coffee when you're out going for a walk." Some assembly members commented that "we've made big advances towards things that are positive for reaching net zero, and we should keep these things: buying locally and supporting local businesses, buying from local shops." One assembly member commented:

> "It hasn't made me feel differently. However there have been changes to how people shop – many are shopping more locally, or growing their own – and to how people see land use, appreciating nature and seeing the benefits of re-wilding (when you leave nature alone how it flourishes). This is something we can build on."

One assembly member noted the complexity of the situation:

> "The effects of lockdown differ so much from person to person it is impossible to say. I don't know enough about how lockdown has affected farmers. I don't know if it has affected land use at all so I don't feel I can comment on this."

Conclusions – impact on the assembly's thinking

Assembly members **tended to agree that Covid-19 and the lockdown had made them think or feel differently about the how the UK should get to net zero** in general. 62% 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' that this was the case; 28% 'strongly disagreed' or 'disagreed'.

Assembly members who reported changed thoughts and feelings talked about areas including:

- There being an **opportunity for change**, including increased willingness to accept it from the general population;
- **Altered perceptions of what is possible**, including what government can do;
- **Lifestyle change that is already happening** – for example, homeworking is proving more doable than some thought; changes to how we travel are taking place;
- **Economic impacts** that, for example, make reaching net zero more difficult.

The impact of Covid-19 and the lockdown on assembly members' thoughts and feelings about topics they had considered before it happened varied.

The **biggest impact was on views about 'how we travel':** 75% of the assembly members who looked at this topic said that Covid-19 and lockdown had changed their thoughts and feelings about how to get to net zero in this area. Key themes in their discussions included:

- **Changes happening to air travel**, with some assembly members suggesting that people may continue to fly less;

- **Homeworking** becoming more acceptable;

- The **impact on public transport**, with some assembly members noting that people are currently less willing to use it and raising questions about whether or not that would last long-term;

- **Increases in cycling and walking**, although some expressed doubts about whether these would hold during the winter.

A minority of assembly members said their thoughts and feelings had changed about the other topics the assembly had considered prior to the pandemic: 'in the home' (35%), **and 'what we eat and how we use the land' and 'what we buy'** (36%).

Assembly members who reported changed thoughts or feelings about heat and energy use '**in the home**' had changed suggested that **the pandemic may make change more likely**: people are more aware of their energy use if they are at home more. They also noted the **increased energy costs of being at home and suggested a need to address them.** They put forward ideas ranging from an allowance from work, to cheap energy, to getting old homes retrofitted.

Assembly members who said their thoughts or feelings on '**what we eat and how we use the land**' or '**what we buy**' noted points including a feeling the UK should be less reliant on imports for its food. They also highlighted shifts in some areas to buying more local produce or from local businesses. Some assembly members suggested that changes to what we buy may now be easier, for example because of reduced incomes or an increased in community spirit.

Assembly members whose views had not changed suggested, among other comments, that the pandemic had provided evidence for views they already held, or underlined their importance. A minority of assembly members noted that they now saw reaching net zero as less of a priority than economic recovery.

Across all the votes, **assembly members tended to avoid expressing 'strong' views** – i.e. they chose 'agree' or 'disagree' rather than 'strongly agree' or 'strongly disagree'. This may reflect the uncertainties and emerging nature of the current situation. In general, their comments reflected the changed context created by Covid-19 rather rather requests for alterations to specific recommendations made earlier in the assembly. Some assembly members raised new issues, such as a the request to help people with the increased energy costs of being at home.

C. Anything else to add

Assembly members' ballot papers included the opportunity to add any final thoughts on Covid-19, recovery and the path to net zero. Many chose to leave comments. We have grouped them under ten overlapping headings, for ease of navigation.

What's important in life

❝ It may [be a] … chance for people to take stock of the important things in life."

❝ It was nice to be able to go for a walk and cross a normally very busy road without seeing a single car. It was good to see how many people started cycling too. My daughter is working from home and doesn't miss the commute to work, has saved money on petrol and has enjoyed spending time with her little boy. Perhaps there are bigger priorities for people's well-being than the state of the economy, and working from home will become the 'new normal'."

❝ Coronavirus [and] lockdown have made us value a more simple way of living, working from home, being with family."

❝ I feel many people will make changes in their own lives – some will, some won't. I feel [the] majority will though, and buy local, work less days a week. More will work from home reducing emissions etc."

Perceptions of what is possible

❝ Hopefully [it] made us look around and see clearer skies, less traffic. Made people see it is possible."

❝ Coronavirus has now shown us what is possible if people rally together and listen to science to save lives. We need to take this approach and move forward as we rebuild the economy."

❝ The lockdown is abnormal hence might not necessarily be a yardstick for climate change net zero aspirations. However, the present situation does prove that given [the] right incentives, humans can adapt."

❝ The Covid-19 crisis has brought home the realisation that we can't rely on quick technological fixes for every emergency. We need to start our work to address climate change now."

Information and communication

❝ Information and education are key for both how people have responded to the virus and how they should engage on the subject of climate change and the net zero target."

❝ It has shown that people can work together when they feel threatened, but also that if people are not fully aware or fully informed of the impending problem they will ignore it."

❝ Use observations of environmental changes seen during this time to show people what happened after such a short time of these restrictions."

An opportunity for change

> This is an opportunity to incorporate net zero into the new reality that will become tomorrow's new normal."

> This is a once in a lifetime opportunity for government to deliver environmental targets as part of our economy recovery."

> I think the lockdown has heightened people's awareness of climate change and what can be achieved. Strike while the iron's hot."

> It will be a grave mistake and missed opportunity if we simply try to helter-skelter back to our previous values and lifestyles."

> To the government: don't miss this chance to help us change the way we live now and for future generations."

Is meeting the net zero target possible or desirable now?

> I don't think that this is now going to be achieved due to the other issues that have been thrust upon us!"

> Concern that the economic impact may now take the focus off the target, as other priorities may be more to the front."

> It's going to be one hell of an effort to get there since companies and governments need to invest in projects/industries etc that will help achieve the goal of net zero."

> I think it has shown that on a personal level, and for our country as a whole, the priority has to be our economic well-being, and that green initiatives are a nice to have, when and if we can afford them."

The relative threat from climate change

> Even though Covid-19 is a priority, the climate emergency is even more urgent. Covid-19, if not contained would rip through our societies and millions would die. As with all pandemics some would survive and the human race would carry on. If we allow the planet to continue heating up to an extent where no intervention from us would stop it, we wouldn't have a world to live on and neither would the diversity of life we depend on."

> I believe the climate emergency is a bigger threat than coronavirus to the UK, the rest of the world and human beings in general. Covid-19 has been the biggest short-term threat we have faced in recent times, but the climate emergency is the biggest long term threat we will ever face. We need to continue with our target to achieve net zero and be the generation that'll be remembered that did everything we could to save our planet and recovered our economy from the coronavirus crisis through investing in carbon zero investments and technologies."

> More lives have been saved by reductions in air pollution already than have been lost to Covid-19. This shows the sheer scale of the crisis facing us with climate change. People are dying, forests are burning, towns and cities are flooding and island nations are disappearing below the waves. Now is the time to take action. Lives depend on us."
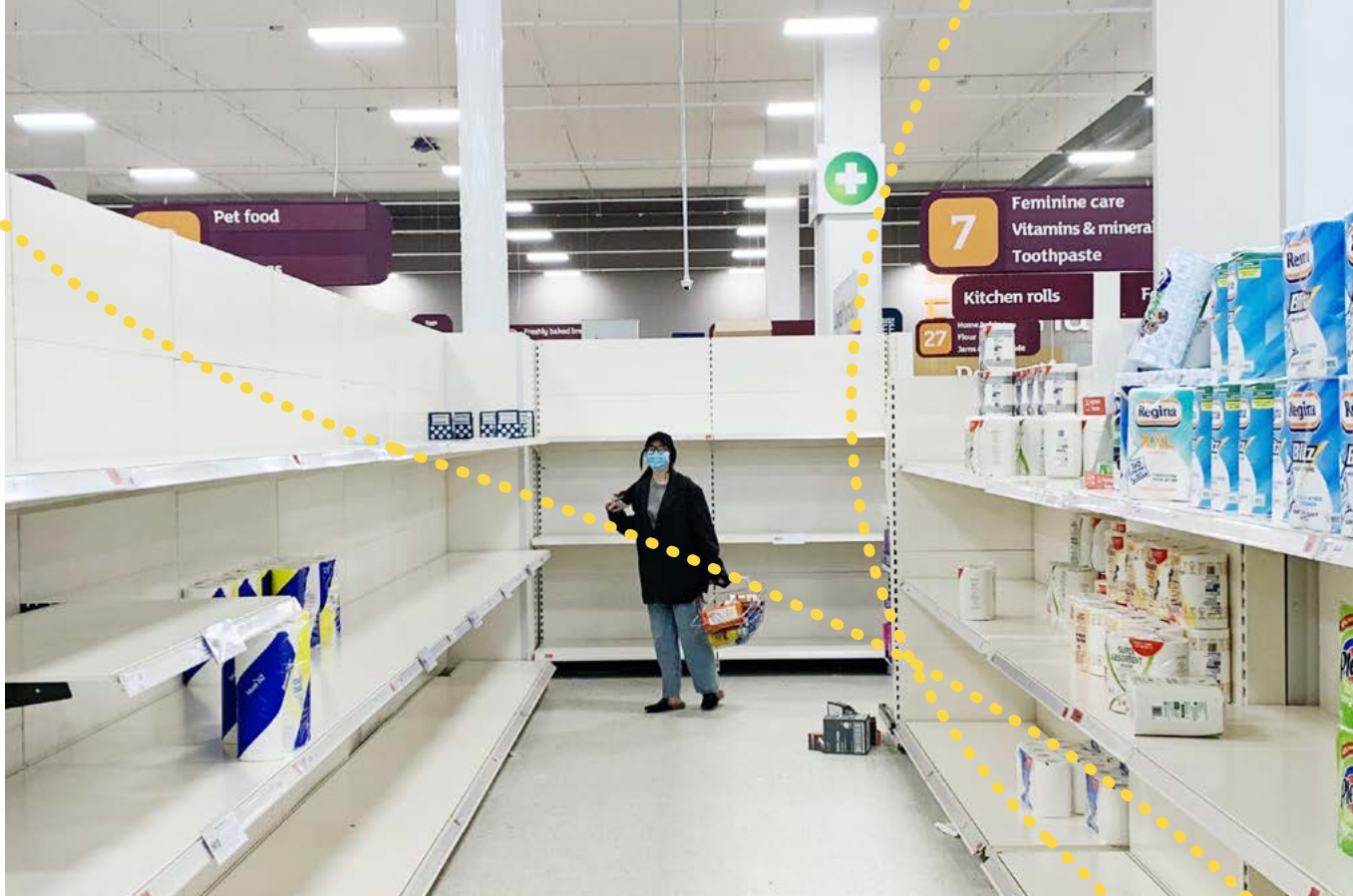
Transparency, leadership and the global context

66 Government should not shy away from net zero in the wake of the virus. It should be bold and lead the discussion and efforts to get the public and companies on board."

66 COP26 is an historic opportunity for the UK to show global leadership, re-establish its place in the world, and help build a global consensus for moving the world towards net zero as it moves out of this crisis."

66 As no country has escaped Covid-19 and some are now working together to find answers and ways forward, perhaps it will be easier for global decisions to be made on climate issues."

66 We need good leadership. Urgently."

66 I think it is likely that the population will come out of this situation with a lower level of trust for the current government. Therefore, I think transparency in how they are reaching net zero, which industries they are investing in and where public money is being spent is vital in how we reach the net zero by 2050 target."

A green economic recovery

66 I really like the idea of … companies [having] to reach certain net zero targets to benefit from government investment with high levels of enforcement."

66 I think the most important thing for the government to do is think of ways to pair reaching net zero and recovering the economy. There are so many ways this can be done – e.g. bailing out companies but only if they agree to invest a [percentage of their] … profits into a low carbon technology."

66 Government should not just bailout companies, there should be a net zero portion to any monies spent …."

66 With all the job losses after lockdown the government will need to retrain people with new skills. Why not achieve net zero with a green revolution."

Incentives for individuals and a basic income

66 There is a concern that household investments in electric cars, heat pumps and double glazing will be delayed because of the squeeze on household incomes. The government needs to think of ways to incentivise purchases which support industry and allow individuals to move their habits to lower carbon [ones], as people will be putting off these big purchases for a while to come otherwise."

66 I don't think you should be bailing out companies; I think you should be bailing out the people. Money is power! So if you give the money to the people, you'll be allowing the people to use their money to spend on the companies that are doing things right. People will be able to buy what they think is right rather than what they can afford. The last thing we need now is another recession, along with people being forced to spend money that they haven't got on making changes they don't understand. Educate the people to create a cleaner world and give them the funds to choose how they want to do this. […] I believe now is the time to create a basic minimum income. Wealth creates wealth. Isn't it time for us to live in times of abundance, where things are done for the benefit of all, including the earth, the environment and the climate."

Additional comments on topics considered by the assembly

How we travel

> ❝ I feel air travel no longer seems such a potent problem, especially for now, so we should probably focus our energies on cleaner power and cars and reduce movement a bit; then we will have a shot at reaching our target."

> ❝ I hope we do not go back to using our cars as much as before, or go back to flying as much as before. Just a reduction in both would help."

> ❝ The pandemic has changed how the decisions we made will work and this needs to be taken into account especially with the issue of how we need to not focus on public transport anymore."

What we eat and what we buy

> ❝ I think it has highlighted how dependent we are on imports, especially in the food industry. If we can produce more locally it would certainly be beneficial for the economy as well as reducing carbon emissions from importing goods from abroad."

> ❝ I think there has been a massive impact on what we consume when there is no opportunity to go shopping (not including food shopping) which will have a further impact on how we live after lockdown, especially if disposable incomes fall. I think this is a chance to encourage people to move away from a disposable, fast-paced consumption to more reusable and repairable goods."

One assembly commented that "I see a lot of positives but many will be in financial difficulties – [the] self-employed, small businesses etc."

Conclusions

Assembly members' views on Covid-19, recovery and the path to net zero are significant. No other group is at once a representative sample of the UK population and well-acquainted with the steps needed to reach net zero.

A clear view emerged from assembly members' discussions that **the current "tough and sad time" presents an opportunity for change that should be taken.**

A large majority of assembly members (79%) 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' that, 'steps taken by the government to help the economy recover should be designed to help achieve net zero'. Their most frequently given reasons included requests for the Government to:

- Limit, or put conditions on, investment in high carbon industries;[8]

- Rethink and invest in infrastructure;

- Support low carbon industries;

- Make the most of the economic opportunities presented by the path to net zero;

- Deal with Covid-19 and climate change together where possible.

Assembly members who were unsure or who disagreed with the statement tended to emphasise a need to focus on economic recovery first and foremost.

Another large majority (93%) of assembly members 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' that, 'as lockdown eases, government, employers and/or others should take steps to encourage lifestyles to change to be more compatible with reaching net zero'. Assembly members backed steps to encourage homeworking and changes to how we travel. They also saw a key role for government in providing leadership and information, alongside roles for business and local areas.

In contrast to the above assembly members **tended to avoid expressing 'strong'[9] views about whether Covid-19 and lockdown had made them think or feel differently about the how the UK should get to net zero.**

Overall they **tended to agree that they now thought or felt differently about how the UK should get to net zero** *in general* **(62%).** They re-emphasised the idea of there being an opportunity for change, whilst also reporting altered **perceptions of what is possible** (e.g. what government can do) and pointing to lifestyle changes that are already happening. Some highlighted the **economic impacts** of the pandemic, suggesting, for example, that they make reaching net zero more difficult.

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8   This was both the most frequently given rationale and the most controversial, with some assembly members disagreeing. Please see pages 488 and 489.

9   They tended to choose 'agree' or 'disagree' in all four relevant votes, rather than 'strongly agree' or 'strongly disagree'.

In terms of topics that the assembly had considered prior to the pandemic, the **biggest impact was on views about 'how we travel':** 73% of the assembly members who looked at this topic said that Covid-19 and lockdown had changed their thoughts and feelings about how to get to net zero in this area. Key themes in their discussions included:

- **Changes happening to air travel**, with some assembly members suggesting that people may continue to fly less;

- **Homeworking** becoming more acceptable;

- **The impact on public transport**, with some assembly members noting that people are currently less willing to use it and raising questions about whether or not that would last long-term;

- **Increases in cycling and walking**, although some expressed doubts about whether these would hold during the winter.

A minority of assembly members said their thoughts and feelings had changed about the other topics the assembly had considered prior to the pandemic: 'in the home' (35%), and 'what we eat and how we use the land' and 'what we buy (36%)'.

Assembly members whose thoughts and feelings had not changed suggested, among other comments, that the pandemic had provided evidence for views they already held, or underlined their importance. A minority noted that they now saw reaching net zero as less of a priority than economic recovery.

In general, assembly members comments reflected the changed context created by Covid-19 rather rather requests for alterations to specific recommendations made earlier in the assembly. Some assembly members raised new issues, such as a a request to help people with the increased energy costs of being at home.