



involve

# CONSTRUCTIVE CONVERSATIONS

ANNUAL REPORT  
2022/23

Talking and listening to tackle the crucial challenges of turbulent times



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# Welcome

## WHAT WE DO

**Involve is the UK's leading public participation charity.**

**We work to make public participation and deliberation an integral, everyday part of democracy, to help solve the challenges of the 21st century.**

Since 2003, we have been working with governments, parliaments, civil society, academics and the public to realise new forms of public participation that revitalise democracy and improve how decisions are made.

## WHY WE DO IT

**We want to build a more vibrant democracy, where everyone can shape a society that works for all of us.**

We need to make important choices as a society. But, most people don't have enough say in the decisions that affect their lives. Existing power structures mean that some groups of people have less influence than others. Decision-makers struggle to tackle complex policy problems. And many people no longer trust in politics to get the job done.

We know things can be done differently — every day we see that when given the assurance that their views will make a difference and enough evidence and time, everyday people can help take on difficult questions, avoid political divides, and deliver sensible answers to the big challenges of our time.

## HOW WE DO IT

**In practice, our work focuses on three areas:**

- **Innovative, Quality Delivery;** working closely with thousands of people in all four nations of the UK to design and deliver innovative participatory and deliberative processes that influence decisions and help this approach become the norm.
- **Building the Capacity of Others;** building the capacity of those making decisions, and developing the body of evidence, principles and standards that support participatory and deliberative best practice.
- **Making the Case;** communicating why participation and deliberation are essential features for a healthy modern democracy, and ensuring those in positions of power and influence understand and support their use.



**WHO DOES IT****We are a dynamic team of 22, experts in participatory and deliberative democracy.**

Our experience covers public engagement, governance, facilitation, policy-making, research, networks, advocacy, strategy and much more.

We also work closely with a number of skilled associates and partners who enhance our communications, facilitation, project management and research work.

**MEMBERS OF OUR MANAGEMENT TEAM DURING 2022/23**

- Sarah Castell – Chief Executive Officer
- Gareth Bridges – Director of Finance & Support Services, appointed January 2023
- Clive Mitchell – Former Director of Operations, resigned February 2023
- Calum Green – Director of Advocacy & Communications
- Kaela Scott – Former Director of Innovation & Practice, resigned February 2023
- Sarah Allan – Director of Capacity Building & Standards

**MEMBERS OF OUR BOARD IN 2022/23**

Our Board of Trustees bring a vast amount of knowledge and experience from national and local government, parliament, civil society, politics, business and think tanks.

During the year our board members were as follows:

- Claire Ainsley
- Paul Braithwaite
- Edward Cox – Chair
- Temidayo Eseonu
- Kathy Jones
- Julie Mellor
- Golam Morshed – Resigned 30 September 2022
- Sharon Squires
- Hannah White – Deputy Chair

**OUR CHARITABLE OBJECTIVES**

We are a registered charity in England and Wales (1130568), and Scotland (SC047314). Our charitable objectives are:

1. To advance education for the public benefit in methods and processes of public participation and democratic practice;
2. To promote good citizenship for the public benefit by encouraging and facilitating participation by the public in democratic and decision making processes with an intended outcome of enabling people to develop their capacities, help meet their needs and participate more fully in society.

**OUR THANKS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

We would like to thank our staff and all the people we have worked with this year. We could not deliver our ambitious goals without the valuable support of politicians, public servants, our funders, our partners and our Board of Trustees.

We would particularly like to thank all the members of the public, from all walks of life, who have taken part in our processes. They have given up their time and energy to make a difference to decision-making and create a better democracy.



# AT A GLANCE

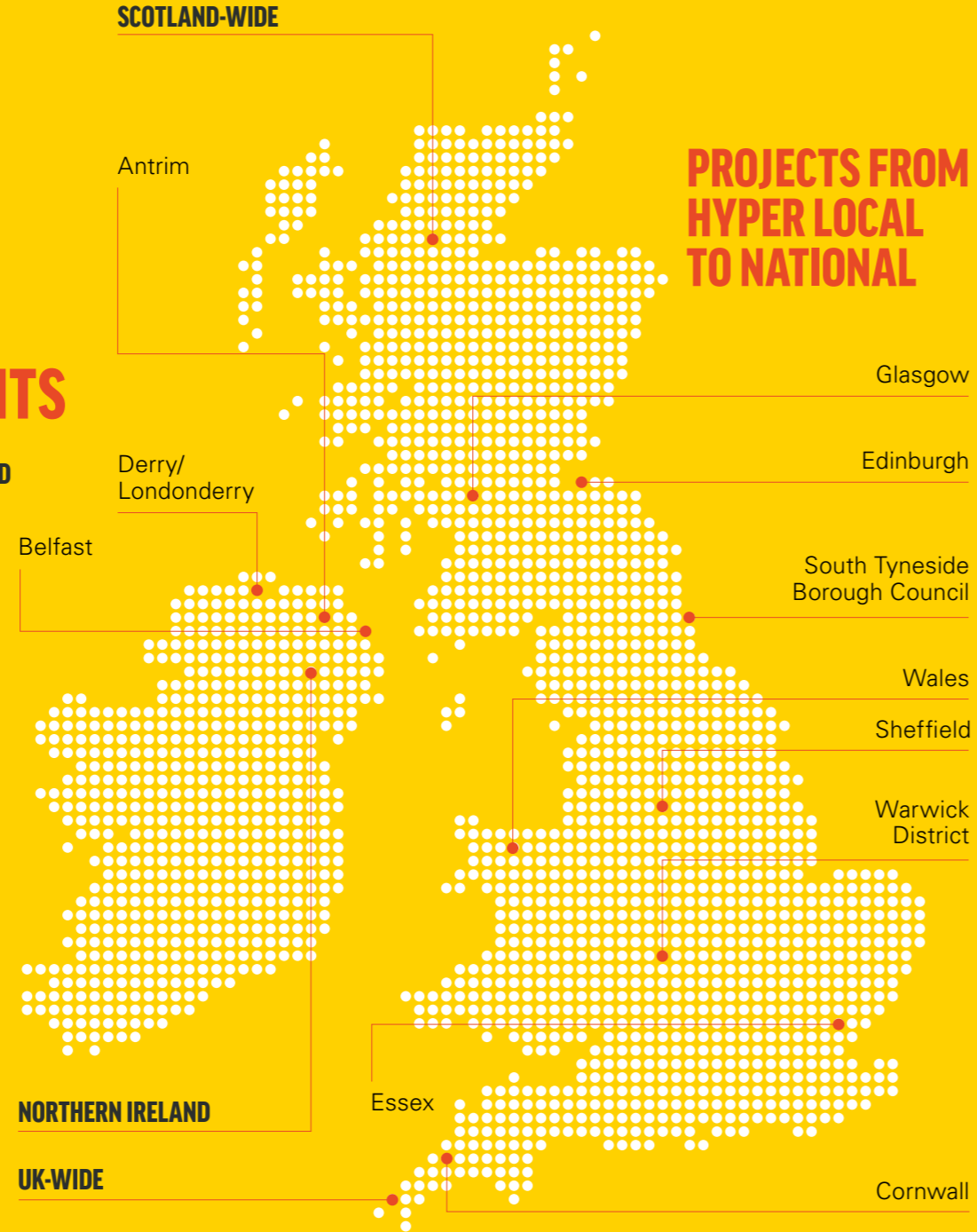
OVER 58 PROJECTS, WORKING WITH BOTH THE PUBLIC AND DECISION MAKERS, TOTTALLING MORE THAN:

**28,239 HOURS** **2,946 PARTICIPANTS**

OF PARTICIPATION, DELIBERATION AND TRAINING IN HOW TO DO BOTH.

OUR ONLINE RESOURCES WERE ALSO VISITED AND USED OVER 241,100 TIMES.

- Camden
- Liverpool City Region
- South East England
- West Midlands
- Portglenone
- Scotland-wide
- Test Valley (Hampshire)
- Glasgow
- Portsmouth and Hampshire
- Northumbria
- Westminster
- Brighton and Hove City Council
- East Riding of Yorkshire Council
- Hebden Royd Town Council & Todmorden Town Council
- The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea
- Kirklees County Council
- Liverpool City Council
- Reading City Council
- Reigate and Banstead Borough Council
- Sheffield City Council
- Rochdale
- Stevenage Borough Council
- Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council
- West Berkshire District Council
- Winchester City Council
- UK-wide
- Stratford District
- England-wide



## WHO WE WORKED WITH

### FUNDERS AND PARTNERS

- Antrim, Ballymena, Coleraine Borough Council
- Barrow Cadbury Trust
- Belfast City Council
- Big Lottery Fund
- Brighton and Hove City Council
- Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation
- Cambridge City Council
- Cambridge University
- Camden Council
- Co-operation Ireland
- Cornwall Council
- Devon County Council
- East Riding of Yorkshire Council
- Engage Britain
- Environment Agency
- Esmée Fairbairn Foundation
- European Climate Foundations
- Forum for the Future
- Genomics England
- Greater Cambridge Partnership
- Hebden Royd Town Council & Todmorden Town Council
- Herefordshire Council
- Housing Rights, Northern Ireland
- Impact Investing Institute
- John Ellerman Foundation
- JRRT
- JRCT
- Kirklees County Council
- L&Q
- Liverpool City Council
- Mid Ulster District Council
- National Trust
- Nethood
- Open Government Partnership
- OSF (Open Society Foundations)
- Queens University Belfast
- RAE (Royal Academy of Engineering)
- Reading City Council
- Reigate and Banstead Borough Council
- Rochdale Borough Council
- RSA (Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce)
- R&R body
- RSPB (The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds)
- Scottish Government

- Scottish Wildlife Trust and Partners
- Sheffield City Council
- Social Care Wales
- SONI (System Operator for Northern Ireland)
- South Tyneside Borough Council
- Stevenage Borough Council
- Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council
- Test Valley Borough Council
- The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea
- UK Bio Bank
- UK Power Networks (UKPN)
- UK Research and Innovation (UKRI)
- University of Exeter
- University of Liverpool
- University of Oxford
- University of Southampton
- University of Westminster
- West Berkshire District Council
- West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA)
- Westminster City Council
- Winchester City Council
- WWF (World Wide Fund for Nature)

COUNCIL  
 UCL  
 SCOTTISH  
 GOVERNMENT  
 GREATER CAMBRIDGE  
 PARTNERSHIP  
 OXFORD  
 HEREFORDSHIRE  
 UNIVERSITY OF  
 LIVERPOOL  
 ANTRIM, BALLYMENA  
 COLERAINE BOROUGH  
 COUNCIL  
 ENVIRONMENT  
 AGENCY  
 UK BIO BANK  
 CAMBRIDGE COUNCIL

# FOREWORD

## This year concluded one of the most politically turbulent years in already unstable times.

Global instability has become the norm. This year, inflation concerns returned to many countries for the first time in decades. Russia and Ukraine remained locked in conflict. Democratic norms, such as a peaceful transfer of power and judicial independence, are being threatened in democracies across the world.

Against this backdrop, life in the UK was also politically turbulent. Accusations of holding parties in lockdown led to the downfall of Boris Johnson, and his successor Liz Truss lasted just forty-five days – the shortest tenure of any UK prime minister in history. And on the social and economic front, the cost of living crisis made life more difficult for many this year. Life has been harder materially, given increases in cost of food, housing and childcare, but also mentally, with reports of increased anxiety and worsening mental health.

Our collective ability to carve out a better way to navigate the big global uncertainties, and shape

societies that work for everyone, depends on better democracy. Each year the need to make more effective choices as a society feels more urgent, but most people feel they don't have enough say in the decisions they care about, don't trust others to make decisions on their behalf, and are concerned that major policy issues are not being tackled with the best interests of all at heart.

At Involve, we understand that having the right conversations with the right people, and listening in the right way, is a crucial step. It's the first step towards building a society that thrives, a society that manages instability, includes everyone, and enables long-term decision making in the face of uncertainty.

This year's annual report highlights the different kinds of conversations which have been designed and activated by Involve across the UK, as we work towards this aim. Now in its nineteenth year, the organisation has used its considerable expertise to convene spaces and help create conversations that build a better experience of democracy for everyone.

In this report you will see examples of formal deliberative Citizens' Assemblies, Juries and Panels which Involve has conducted. You'll also read about innovative ways of speaking with groups whose voices are often less heard, and new ways to blend training, mentoring, capacity building and public engagement, to embed the practice of these new conversations in our politics and government.

The conversations we have conducted have led to real change. The work has helped the public inform better decisions for our future, find common ground across divides, and empowered people from all walks of life.

We see this in some of our products. This year, Involve has created: a plan for the people, by the people about the future of nature; public-led proposals for our future in a technologically advancing world; direction for the Scottish government on ensuring fair levels of income; and recommendations for how those impacted by homelessness can determine their housing future.

We also see the ripple effects in the longer term work of building the capacity of significant institutions to adopt a more participatory way of doing things. For example, our training, facilitating and support in Camden has helped the council embody a deliberative approach to a number of different decisions. The council has acted as a leader in taking forward deliberation in London, with other local authorities following in their footsteps. And at a UK-wide level, we have helped build the capacity of Parliament to increasingly work with the public when scrutinising the Government. Several select committees have started to use public deliberation in their inquiries this year, with further plans for 2023/24.

And finally, we see this in the role we play in the wider democracy sector – we understand that getting better at including people in

decisions that affect their lives is only one part of what our democracy needs to look like to tackle the big challenges of the 21st century. We also need a better way to elect politicians, more transparent and accountable institutions, and greater protection of civil liberties. That is why we've continued to host The Democracy Network, and have helped it go from strength to strength in its second year. Together, we are building the democracy we need. The journey to a participatory society takes time – but will be achieved, one conversation at a time.

We look forward next year to carrying on our work with you, and everyone who shares our mission, to build the democracy we need to support us through turbulent times.

**ED COX**  
INVOLVE CHAIR



# 01 INTRODUCTION

## The most powerful tools we have: speaking and listening.

All of us possess the strongest tools to fix the biggest problems of our day. Tools that have already changed more lives and are more powerful than today's modern software, including AI. Something exciting, influential, and really effective, if used collectively.

It's our ability to talk, and to listen. And the right conversations, with the right people, can unlock our biggest challenges.

In our world today, when so many of us mistrust and are disengaged from the political landscape, it can be hard to know how to even start talking about the issues that matter to us. We may not have the right information; sometimes we are even misinformed. Our feelings, relationships and the views of the

people we love come into play as well as our ability to look at the bigger picture. Everywhere we look, we can witness the struggles of those unable to find common ground.

The challenging, complex problems we face today can't be solved by one person alone — no one citizen, expert or policymaker. Our political and decision making systems are not fully equipped to make good decisions.

But the problems can begin to be resolved by bringing the wisdom and voices of diverse groups of people, all with their own perspectives and different lived experiences.

When these groups of people, citizens, experts and policymakers, come together, it is vital that they are given all the information they need to understand the problems we're all facing. The conversations they have must include information, questioning, processing,

and reflection. Then, and only then, can they use their "supertools" — the tools of hearing, listening, sharing, and sense-making to find solutions.

## We at Involve believe that this is the missing piece in our democracy.

We will solve the biggest problems we face by finding common ground through talking and listening. In the right spaces, supported by the right processes, and as part of decision making, this can lead to real change.

People exercising the power of their voices — collectively — is the essence of democracy.

We have seen this year in our work at Involve that placing participatory conversations at the heart of problem-solving develops mutual understanding and creates positive action towards a fair and vibrant future.

We hope the case studies we share in this report demonstrate how participatory democracy, at the heart of government, can be used more often, and in more places. We believe that these processes can shift our current systems to ensure they work better for everyone.

We are working to make sure everyone's voice is heard in solving the problems we face. Will you join us?

## WE ARE BUILDING A DEMOCRACY FIT FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

With a mission to lead the UK in making public participation and deliberation an everyday part of democracy, and to help solve the challenges of the 21st century, we are helping build a democracy fit for the future. This report highlights four areas where we have made a difference to decision making:

- Making tomorrow's choices today
- Amplifying the voices of those less heard
- Supporting everyone to do democracy
- Building a vibrant democracy ecosystem

The next chapters discuss each area, with one or two examples of the work we have done. It complements our Statutory Trustees' Report and Audited Accounts for 2022/23, which you can find on our website.



# 02 MAKING TOMORROW'S CHOICES TODAY

**We make choices every day. It could be what breakfast cereal we want to eat, what television show we want to watch or what colour shirt to wear.**

Some of these choices may seem irrelevant to the bigger world, but every decision you make is important to you — and all our small decisions add up to create the world we live in. Some decisions are more important than others. The results from them affect

many people, or they create unfair impact, disproportionately bearing on only a few. Some impact the planet we live on and the generations to come.

However, our political system is dominated by elections and media cycles that focus our attention on the decisions made for the short-term.

The bigger issues, often complex due to the many different trade-offs they contain, and the nature of the politics around them, seem to be pushed further and further down the road, and rarely addressed head on.

Whether it's how we should achieve net zero in Scotland by 2035; or whether the human genome should be allowed to be edited to remove hereditary diseases; whether it's addressing our dependence on cars in populated cities, or how to make sure everyone in the UK gets the health care they need; we have been finding ways for people and politicians to make the decisions together. We have done this through talking about the important topics — and coming up with solutions that everyone can live with, and which will support a vibrant future.

**Our work this year shows that when everyone has a say, we have better ideas for how to solve difficult problems. Rather than waiting until a problem becomes a crisis, we can decide together how to make the future world work for everyone.**

**This lets us focus on the future beyond the next election, or the one after that: the future we need.**



## CASE STUDY

### PEOPLE'S PLAN FOR NATURE

**A plan created for the people, by the people of the UK about the future of nature — which recommends actions we can all take to make better future decisions.**

The People's Plan for Nature paints a vision of a desired future and sets out the actions that we — governments, businesses, charities, organisations, farmers and communities — must take to protect and restore nature. The creation of the plan was funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, Samworth Foundation and the European Climate Foundation, and underwritten by the WWF, the RSPB and the National Trust.

The project used a two-stage participatory model to build a public mandate for the plan's recommendations. First, a National Conversation on Nature, designed by the New Citizenship Project, set out what people in the UK cared about when it came to protecting and restoring nature. There were nearly 30,000 responses to an open call for stories and ideas. These discussions, plus a wealth of academic and expert information on nature, was brought to a People's Assembly, in which 103 people took part. The Assembly was designed and delivered by Involve.

At the Assembly, these 103 people came from all walks of life from across the UK to deliberate and agree on the recommendations which formed The People's Plan for Nature. This plan recommends the actions that we can all take to protect and restore nature: with recommendations for local and national governments, businesses, charities and communities to help nature in the UK to thrive.

## HOW DID THE ASSEMBLY WORK?

Over the course of four weekends, the assembly heard from expert witnesses and different opinions on the future of nature and the changes needed. The participants took part in facilitated discussions where they developed a vision for the future of nature in the UK, their 26 detailed calls to action, and their top priorities.

An advisory group ensured the design of the People's Assembly for Nature, and the selection of who presented, was impartial and fair.

## IMPACT

The three charities who supported the Plan made formal responses to the Plan, and embedded the recommendations of the Assembly in their ongoing advocacy.

**A significant media launch resulted in a combined reach of 78.7 million people, with 2 million reached on social media at launch, and 4 million as of the end of the year.**

Participants from the Assembly have also been on a journey, gaining media and advocacy training and supporting the three NGOs to take their message to central government decision makers, political parties, local government and businesses.



After the launch, over 20,000 people emailed their MP to back the Plan and every political party in the UK engaged via assembly members and outreach from the three NGOs.

There were written responses to the Plan from the Welsh Government and from the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, Northern Ireland.

The Liberal Democrats' policy paper included the Plan, and there was backing from the cross-party APPG and from Peers for the Planet.

There were significant local government impacts and meetings with different local authorities, plus 260 businesses were engaged with the Plan, and financial commitments have been made of over £1 million to legacy projects.

### THE FUTURE IS STILL BEING WRITTEN

You can still add your voice to the plan by visiting the [People's Plan for Nature website](#).



### CASE STUDY

## SCIENCEWISE

### Choosing the science and technology future that serves us all.

In this era of rapid advancements across various fields, from [Human Developmental Biology](#) to [Net Zero Technologies](#), and from [Genome Editing](#) to [Artificial Intelligence](#), the world of science and technology offers astonishing opportunities.

However, there are profound implications for society. The decisions we make today about future technology greatly affect our lives, health, environment, and economy. This reality underscores the critical need for inclusive public dialogue that informs, influences, and enhances UK policy and research by including the hopes, aspirations and concerns of the public.

Sciencewise is a programme led and funded by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), and operated by Involve on their behalf, with our Consortium partners, the British Science Association (BSA) and the National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE). While running the programme, we have advised UKRI and others on the best ways to embed public voices in decision making; supported UKRI to implement its public engagement strategy; and played a key role in discussions about the future of public engagement in the science and innovation research ecosystem.

Since 2004, Sciencewise has provided expertise and financial support to commissioners in research councils, government departments and other publicly funded bodies. To date, the Sciencewise programme has funded and supported more than 70 public dialogues, on topics ranging from digital identities to data science, synthetic biology to stem cells, genomic medicine to geoen지니어ing to climate and AI.

In the year 2022/23, Sciencewise completed eight dialogues, which equated to 480 public participants, 67 specialist speakers, 600 event sign ups and 6,285 participant hours.

Also this year, the Sciencewise programme demonstrated the value of using public dialogue to inform strategic areas of public policy in its work with the Government Office for Science in developing a foresight report. A Sciencewise

supported dialogue provided an additional strand to this developing work to ensure that the [foresight report](#) was presented in the context of public perspectives, aspirations and concerns. Reflecting on the work, Nina Grassmann, Senior Social and Behavioural Scientist and Jack Snape, Head of Foresight, Government Office for Science, said

**“ If you are thinking of future policies – whether that be futures scenarios work, policy or research, the rich insight that comes from understanding public perspective adds depth and insight to that planning, helping to create more robust policy and research outcomes. ”**

The Sciencewise programme continues to support vital insight for researchers and policymakers, contributing to more robust policy and research outcomes for all. There are a number of dialogues currently live around topics such as climate and environment, data, AI and robotics, health, ageing and wellbeing and life sciences and biotechnology, alongside a string of exciting events due to take place in the coming year.

In 2024, the Sciencewise programme will reach its 20th anniversary. To mark this occasion, three events will be held to reflect on the history of Sciencewise and look forward to the future of the programme, along with the future for public dialogue and other participatory, deliberative and socially responsive contributions to research and innovation. The aim of these events is to raise awareness of the benefits of public dialogue among civil servants and potential commissioners, and to celebrate Sciencewise's position as a leading source of knowledge and expertise in this field.

The programme also helps continue to build the case that the public must be part of deciding how we use science and technology in years to come, particularly where technical advances have major moral implications, such as in the use of data, artificial intelligence and genome editing. Through these dialogues, we have demonstrated that highly complex, future-focused issues can benefit from quality public engagement.



CASE STUDY

## UK CITIZENS' JURY ON GENOME EDITING

**Bringing people with lived experience of genetic conditions into decision making around future law around human embryo editing.**

Genome editing is a technique that allows scientists to make precise changes to the DNA of living organisms, which can have benefits for health, agriculture and animal welfare, but also raises ethical and social concerns.

The UK Citizens' Jury on Genome Editing was run by Involve, in partnership with the Society and Ethics Research Group, Connecting Science at the Wellcome Genome Campus, and Genetic Alliance. The jury selection involved patients, family and carers directly affected by genetic disorders in a deliberative process about the use of genome editing in human embryos. The project is part

of a global initiative to run a Global Citizens' Assembly on the same topic, with input from different countries and perspectives.

The UK Jury consisted of 22 people who had personal experience of genetic conditions. They were asked: **should the UK Government ever think about changing the law to permit deliberate genome editing of human embryos for serious genetic conditions?**

They heard from experts and other people with lived experience, and then developed a set of recommendations for policy makers and scientists. A documentary film was made about the Jury, showing how it worked and what the participants learned and decided. [You can watch the film here.](#)

The outcome of the UK Jury was that most of the participants (17 to 4) supported the idea of changing the law to allow genome editing of human embryos for serious genetic conditions, under certain conditions and safeguards. The jury also expressed a range of views and concerns about the potential implications and risks of the technology, and the need for public involvement and oversight.

As our society needs to balance the interests of different groups around future technology, showing that those groups can have those voices heard in the decision process will help us to do this.

## PROJECT LEARNINGS

**Importantly, the discussion during the jury also broadened out to include wider considerations about minority voices and power.**

How should lived experience, the emotional labour of sharing that experience, and the need to create recommendations to power be balanced — in a jury made up of many different participants?

This fruitful discussion went to the heart of many of the issues around power and deliberation, and gave rise to further internal discussion and learning for the Involve team. The room acknowledged that those in the positions of undertaking actual research into genomics were predominantly white and middle class — and, indeed, the structure of deliberation often also reflects these biases in designers and facilitators. This meant that genomic research and treatment outputs were reflecting wider structural inequalities — and, potentially, so could deliberation. Jurors were asked to deliberate on how they could centre inclusivity in all their discussions, as it had been a consistent underlying theme.



# 03 AMPLIFYING THE VOICES OF THOSE LESS HEARD

**When you listen to people talk about the world: who is it you hear the most? And who do you think is being listened to?**

More often than not, it is the people who are perceived to be in power: those with the ability to influence and make decisions that affect others.

According to Carnegie UK's report, *Life in the UK*, 73% of people in the UK feel that they cannot influence decisions affecting the UK as a whole. 56% of people feel unable to influence decisions even at a local level.

These numbers are not good: we live in a democracy, where citizens should feel empowered to speak their minds across a variety of issues, and believe that they will be heard.

Currently, our democratic institutions don't go far enough to envisage a world where power is more evenly shared. Important decisions about our shared future overemphasise the views of the most powerful, while other less heard voices go unheard.

But at Involve, we see how this can change for the better. We think that our society needs better ways to challenge the imbalance in who has a say. With our work this year we asked questions like:

- **How can we affect the ways our environment impacts our health?**
- **How can schools in England be designed to be more inclusive for young people with special educational needs and disabilities?**
- **How can we collectively help people experiencing homelessness?**

As part of this work, we are intentional about who is in the room. Sometimes, it's important that the room reflects the wider public, using processes such as sortition. But, other times, the issue at hand massively impacts a particular group more than others. In this case, we centre those most affected.

**This year, we've brought together people with diverse points of view and held spaces for those with more, and less, power to work together. We've witnessed mutual understanding grow and seen shared visions for the future emerge.**

## CASE STUDY

### PUTTING THE 'US' IN HOUSING

**How should people affected by poor housing and homelessness be meaningfully involved in policy decisions?**

Having a place where you feel safe is a basic human right. However, this right is not something equally provided for. Homelessness refers to not only those people who are sleeping rough, but can affect people in ways that are more hidden: those trapped in temporary accommodation, hostels, shelters or those staying with friends and families, without a house of their own.

In 2022 Northern Ireland's charity Housing Rights commissioned Involve to research the involvement of groups affected by housing and homelessness in policy and service design decisions in Northern Ireland.

The research aimed to identify unheard groups, assess mechanisms for meaningful involvement used now in NI and elsewhere, and recommend practical solutions to close the gaps in participation so that policy and services can be shaped by those most impacted.

The report identified significant overlap between people experiencing poor housing

and homelessness and those facing barriers to participation. These barriers often stem from factors contributing to inequalities, such as poverty, education, confidence, work and caring responsibilities, language and literacy barriers, and disabilities.

Poor housing is both a result and cause of inequity, with poverty being a unifying factor across all demographics experiencing poor housing and homelessness. However, those most vulnerable, including low-income individuals in the private rented sector and those experiencing homelessness, have few formal avenues to influence decisions affecting them.

In an effort to change this, the report used a participatory democracy lens, advocating for decision-making to be done **with and by the people affected**. It emphasises that good participation requires understanding the language of participation and its impact on planning, implementation, and evaluation processes. It also highlights that participation is never neutral and occurs in a context of unequal power relations.

Involve's report called for fresh and bold approaches to policy and service design, shaped by the expertise and needs of people with experience of poor housing and homelessness. Without amplifying the voices of those less heard, we will not be able to make change. When all parties affected are involved, with powers that can impact change, we will see a difference.



## CASE STUDY

## INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS CITIZENS PANEL

**How can schools in England be designed to be more inclusive for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities? (SEND)**

**W**e co-designed what is believed to be the first citizen panel about improving the English school system, with a particular focus on inclusivity. Importantly, this is also the first citizen panel to include children and young people with additional needs as panel members.

Funded by the RSA's Innovation in Democracy programme on behalf of UKRI, this project had two aims. First to understand how democratic processes such as Citizens' Panels can be made more inclusive. Second, to understand how education professionals, young people with and without special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), and partners can work together to make recommendations for how schools can become more inclusive.

The teams leading the project included academics from the Universities of Exeter, Portsmouth, and



Northumbria. The panel was made up of young people with additional needs, their parents, young people without additional needs and teachers. The young people with additional needs and their parents met online in preparatory sessions which enabled the team to build relationships and understand how best to enable the young people to be active participants.

Over the first two sessions, done online, panel members were taken through a facilitated process of learning and dialogue. The process was designed to ensure all participants felt

comfortable with the level of complexity in the information received, the way this information was presented, and the pace of the dialogue.

The importance of building relationships and familiarising the young people with SEND to the panel's process paid off at the final face-to-face event. We distributed photographs of the venue during the on-boarding of panel members, which helped when we came together to run the event. We offered a quiet room which was used, along with providing tours of the venue. We learned through the process that attention to these small

**We brought together and co-designed what is believed to be the first citizen panel about improving the English school system, with a particular focus on inclusivity. Importantly, this is also the first citizen panel to include children and young people with additional needs as panel members.**

allowances to better familiarise members with a space can be beneficial to all participants, not only those with additional needs.

The panel's key purpose, which we achieved, was to agree on a set of recommendations by young people with SEND for themselves, and other young people with SEND, which could have a real-world impact on their school and future experiences. The project team is socialising the findings with schools in the local area and nationally.

We hope that with this project, a standard can be set to normalise spaces where voices less heard are listened to — and spaces can be made to fit them, rather than the other way around.





## CASE STUDY

## SCOTTISH MINIMUM INCOME GUARANTEE

## How can Scotland deliver a minimum income guarantee for all?

Living in a society, where everyone has a sufficient level of income to live a dignified, healthy and financially secure life, seems like something we would all want. But, how can we ensure that it is developed fairly and appropriately?

The Scottish Government is committed to developing a minimum income guarantee (MIG) for Scotland, which could be delivered through a combination of fair employment, real living wages, social security, key services and tax relief.

To define and deliver a MIG, the Scottish Government established a cross party Steering Group, and an Expert Group consisting of organisations and individuals with relevant knowledge and experience. However, to work for those who will most benefit from the MIG, its design must reflect the views and needs of those who are most affected by poverty, insecurity and inequality in Scotland.

That is why Involve convened an Experts by Experience Public Panel, composed of people who have lived experience of low and insecure incomes and financial uncertainty. The panel works in collaboration with the Expert Group, providing input and feedback on the principles, design decisions and delivery needs of a MIG.

The panel members draw on their own experiences to support design of a MIG that addresses the right issues and is delivered in ways that will bring about transformational change.

Within these sessions, the panel has talked about topics including the definition and purpose of a MIG, principles of fairness for all, what it means to live a dignified quality of life, and how this can be achieved. The panel members have contributed by sharing their experiences, insights and suggestions, as well as raising valuable questions and challenges. They have also expressed their hopes and expectations for a MIG, and how it could make a difference in their lives and in Scotland as a whole.

The Experts by Experience Public Panel ran through 2022/23 and is continuing into the next year. It is an example of how Involve supports the Scottish Government to involve the public in policy making, especially on issues that affect them directly.

By bringing together people with lived experience, those whose voices are perhaps not always heard, with experts, the panel aims to ensure that the MIG is informed by a richer set of evidence.



# 04 SUPPORTING EVERYONE TO DO DEMOCRACY

**We know that making our society a place that works for everyone may seem like a task too big to tackle. At Involve, we know that none of us can achieve it alone.**

So a vital part of the work we have done this year is to support and build the capacity of public servants and practitioners.

We worked this year in developing and delivering training courses and mentoring programmes, along with supporting programmes that can embed public participation and engagement within projects, such as our [guide on place-based impact investing](#), upskilling resident involvement teams to meaningfully involve residents in their service areas, or helping the [UK biobank to deepen participant engagement](#).

**Strengthening our democracy must be everyone's responsibility. This year, our work has helped build networks and communities of practice. We have helped others work together, so that none of us has to go it alone.**



CASE STUDY

## LOCAL CLIMATE ENGAGEMENT

### Working with 21 local authorities to create shared best practice on how to engage the public on climate change.

The [Local Climate Engagement programme](#) launched in late 2021 through 2022/23, works with 21 local authorities in England to deliver high-quality public engagement projects on local climate policy and initiatives. The idea came from local authorities expressing a desire to better include their communities in climate decision-making, yet saying they weren't sure where to start. This aligned with what we heard from members of the public, who told us that they too would like to see local engagement on climate and considered it important.

The programme provides local authorities with a combination of training, hands-on support,

mentoring, tailored resources, and peer learning to support council officers and elected representatives. This provides the capacity for them to engage in high quality and inclusive local public engagement, by placing citizens at the centre of decisions on how to achieve net zero.

### **Our Local Climate Engagement programme has successfully shifted local authorities' thinking on engagement: from communication to collaboration.**

This approach encourages policy and programme development that gathers public buy-in, is more effective, saves resources, and boosts credibility.

Despite systemic issues like resource constraints and complex decision-making structures, we have helped local authorities make significant strides when they have senior-level support/support of an elected representative. This has led to the translation of ideas into impactful projects. Our mentoring offer has been instrumental in helping some local authorities implement their ideas. Even a small amount of time can significantly shape an engagement piece.

While climate change is an important issue, it often gets overshadowed by other pressing concerns like the cost-of-living crisis. Successful local authorities have managed to draw a clear link

between these issues, ensuring the climate focus is not lost.

A rewarding aspect of our project was creating a community for local authorities to share their experiences. We identified a need for a nationwide network on climate, which we aim to facilitate in the future.

The programme is gaining wider recognition, with more local authorities requesting training and mentoring. Some have even commissioned their own engagement pieces. We're exploring the development of an open platform of free materials to assist other local authorities.

Involve's continued work with LCE enables and supports many to build their own capacity and become agents of democratic change impacting and influencing circles far beyond their own.

Keep an eye on [our website](#) and [newsletter](#) to hear more.



## CASE STUDY

## SUPPORTING COUNCILS THAT ARE PUTTING PEOPLE AT THE HEART OF THEIR DECISION MAKING PROCESS

**Our work in Camden showcases how one deliberative process can expand on, or lead to, another.**

Camden is leading the way for deliberative and participatory processes among London's local authorities. We have been involved in projects that engage residents in shaping the borough's future such as the [Climate Action Panel](#), the [Housing and Property Panel](#), and the [Residents' Data Panel](#) where participants co-created Camden's first Data Charter.

The [Climate Action Panel](#) is a group of 20 residents who advise Camden Council on their Climate Action Plan. The Panel emerged as a direct recommendation from Camden's Citizens' Assembly on the Climate Crisis in 2019. We are now in the second iteration of the panel, which will run until 2025, with the first running from 2020 – 2022. This iteration will help the council make sure their projects reflect the needs and views of residents. We are working with the council to design a programme of ongoing



engagement for the panel members, so they can stay connected and engaged with the process.

The [Housing and Property Panel](#) is running from September 2022 – 2024, meeting regularly to provide honest and constructive feedback to Camden on existing and proposed projects and developments. Panel Members comment on things like repairs, safety, capital works, and anti-social behaviour. They also speak with senior officers, (such as Chief Exec Jenny Rowlands, Director of Housing Glendine Shepherd, Head of Neighbourhoods Maria Jacobs amongst others), share their own experiences, and suggest how to improve the housing and property services and communications.

The [Data Panel](#) brought together a residents' panel alongside a pilot methodology called a distributed dialogue to design Camden's first Data Charter. A distributed dialogue is based on the idea that complex issues need to involve a range of conversations that happen in different spaces. It therefore entails a number of dialogue events organised by interested parties (rather than centrally planned) which are held across different geographical areas and, through a range of different media including on-line forums.

Within this project, we have trained community facilitators to engage with community groups along with supporting participants to develop their perspectives on how data is used for personal health and social care management as well as for research, planning and service redesign.

**“ My experience from our work in Camden is that when people and communities are given more power and agency, when our planning for the future is rooted in the imagination of our citizens and communities, we all benefit. This is why I believe a participative approach must sit at the core of our society and how we deliver public services. ”**

**By Cllr Georgia Gould, leader of Camden London Borough Council | 16 May 2023**

*No time to wait – let's lead the way to a power shift, The MJ*



The Project connected community groups with the Residents' Panel on Data that went on to create a Data Charter. The charter was approved by councillors in January 2022. More talks started in the summer of 2022, where community groups were asked to use the Data Charter to decide whether specific data projects should go ahead or not. We held a second Residents' Panel in early 2023 where panel members provided feedback on Camden's implementation of the Data Charter. Camden has committed to ongoing community engagement on the Data Charter to ensure it remains resident-led.

Within Camden, we have seen how our work supporting deliberative processes and dialogue can make a difference and real changes. In early 2023 Involve and Camden ran Camden's first Citizens' Assembly on the Evening and Night Time Economy. The 47 assembly members met to develop a vision for the future of Camden's Evening and Night Time and make recommendations about how the Council, businesses and Camden's communities could achieve this vision together.

This exciting project has sparked interest from other Councils in the area, with Westminster City Council working towards their first Evening and Night Time Citizens' Assembly in 2024.

We are looking forward to continuing to support Camden in their journey of deliberative democracy.



# 05 BUILDING A VIBRANT DEMOCRACY ECOSYSTEM

## WE LIVE IN AN ECOSYSTEM, IN WHICH WE INTERACT WITH THE ENVIRONMENT AROUND US

So, for example, we share the planet with an estimated **2.13 million species of animals** and an approximate **391,000 species of plants**, all of which are connected to, and affect one another, in countless ways.

Our democracy is similar. It is brought to life by the interplay between institutions, the rights and laws which govern them, the work of civil society, and the passion of individuals. When it comes to assessing, researching, caring for, protecting and improving our democracy, this work creates an ecosystem in itself. There are thousands — perhaps millions — of people working across the UK to improve how our democracy functions, and ultimately, how we determine our collective future.

Involve's work this year has supported this important ecosystem to work together, identify shared aims and become greater than the sum of its parts.



## CASE STUDY

## THE DEMOCRACY NETWORK

**Building a sector that's ready and able to deliver the democracy we need.**

A major project for Involve has been the hosting of the UK's Democracy Network.

The Democracy Network is a network of people and organisations working on issues of power, democracy and voice in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Members of the network support each other to connect and collaborate, share and learn, build how to agree ways forward, and take action and influence decision makers together.

The aim of the project is to help build a democracy in the UK fit for the 21st century, where more people have more influence over the decisions that affect our lives, more power and resources to improve our communities and where holding our politicians and governments to account is straightforward and accessible to all.

The project began when following a call for proposals, Involve was awarded an initial three-year grant of £350,000 from the Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust (JRRT), which included



a contribution of £50,000 from the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust (JRCT). Further funding was secured from the Open Societies Foundation to deliver membership development work and to campaign together to improve our democracy. Last year The Democracy Network launched the website and social media accounts, and built our first Democracy Conference of 100+ people together, in person, in early December 2022.

In the first year, the Network team, housed within Involve, focused our efforts on building trust and relationships, bringing together a diversity of groups within the sector, and forming the governance and strategic approaches required for the Network to flourish.

Our second year saw the Network grow to 1068 subscribers, 425+ members and 54 organisations actively engaged in our decision-making structures. 980 people also attended 46 different events and activities.

### Important things The Democracy Network did this year:

- Successfully arranged meetings on Voter ID as part of the Network's campaigns and influencing work, and made resources available on the DN website.
- Collaborated with a diverse range of organisations — many of whom hadn't worked together before — to make a submission to the Labour National Policy Forum.
- A growing general election working group with around 40 organisations contributing.
- Spoke at events at both the Labour Party and Conservative Party conferences.
- Hosted a successful round-table with the Gordon Brown Constitutional Commission with tangible influence on issues such as use of citizens' juries.
- Increased the political profile of the Network through the media. The Democracy Network's director, Jessie Joe Jacobs, has taken part in a number of local and national radio interviews and members of the team have spoken on a variety of panels at conferences, policy discussions and round-tables.

- Ran the inaugural Democracy Network conference with around 100 attendees and 40+ speakers and contributors from across the political spectrum with Liberal Democrat and Labour Party members of parliament and conservative think tank Onward delivering speeches. More than 84% of attendees reported the event as useful, good or excellent.
- Hosted the Democracy Network's first UK Democracy Awards. Amongst positive feedback from attendees was award winners mentioning their award win in funding bids — and in at least one case, it is believed to have had a significant impact on the outcome of their application. Other winners promoted their award on their website and job advertisements.



### Future Plans

The Network's plans for 2023/2024 are even more exciting. In January 2024 the Democracy Network will host its second annual conference, bringing together people and organisations from across the sector for two days of workshops and discussions covering themes including intersectional justice, transparency, integrity, and ethical governance, as well as local and regional democracy, the need for renewal, and the state of the nation's democracy.

The period leading up to the next UK general election, and the first 100 days of the next government, provide an historic opportunity to accelerate progress towards greater democracy in the UK. Against this backdrop, and in a first for the Network, is the launch of a public-facing, platform campaign to build understanding of and support for the need for democratic renewal.

Alongside these inspiring developments, are improvements to The Democracy Network website to better integrate tools and resources to help individuals and organisations in the democracy sector to better achieve their aims.

All of this will be delivered alongside the growing programme of events, training and activities to allow people and organisations to do what they do better, stay connected to others in the sector and stay informed. It is only together can we create change to make a vibrant democratic ecosystem, where we are stronger together.

# 06 RESOURCES

Check out [our website](#) for more resources around participation and deliberation.

## KNOWLEDGE BASE

Our Knowledge Base has lots of free guidance on the benefits of public participation, planning participatory processes, getting started with digital engagement, evaluating the impact of participation, how and why people participate and much more.

[Find out more](#)

## METHODS LIBRARY

Our methods library outlines over 50 different participatory and deliberative methods, including what they are, when they should be used, their strengths and weaknesses and what they cost.

[Find out more](#)

## OFF-THE-SHELF AND BESPOKE TRAINING

Our tailored training helps organisations, institutions and authorities to develop their skills and understanding of participatory, dialogue and deliberative public engagement processes, facilitation skills, specific engagement methods like World Café or co-production, and more.

[Find out more](#)

## PUBLICATIONS

Our collection of publications include handbooks, toolkits, reports and policy notes that share good practice in engagement and participation, such as our [community engagement handbook for investors](#), [a practical guide on climate engagement](#) and [our proposals for how to put citizens at the heart of improving and enforcing rules for MPs](#).

[Find out more](#)

## ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION NETWORK (EPN)

Our Engagement and Participation Network (EPN) will offer a home for people doing public participation and engagement in the UK. We are currently seeking funding to co-create the network with other organisations, institutions and individuals that practise public participation and engagement. You can express interest in joining now on our website.

[Find out more](#)

# 07 FUNDING AND FINANCES

This chapter summarises our funding and finances for 2022/23. It complements the detailed breakdown in our **Statutory Trustees' Report and Audited Accounts**, which you can find on our website.

Breakdown of funding in 2022/23:

## CONSULTANCY

**£1,416,559**

## GRANTS

**£806,123**

## TRAINING

**£36,040**

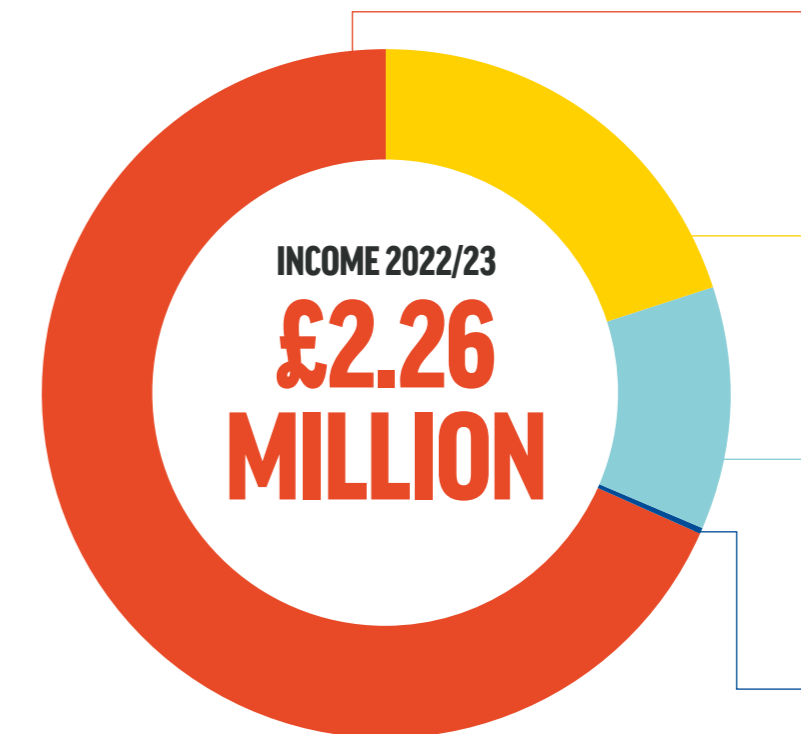
## DONATIONS

**£4,816**

## INCOME

We raised a total of **£2.26 million in 2022/23**.

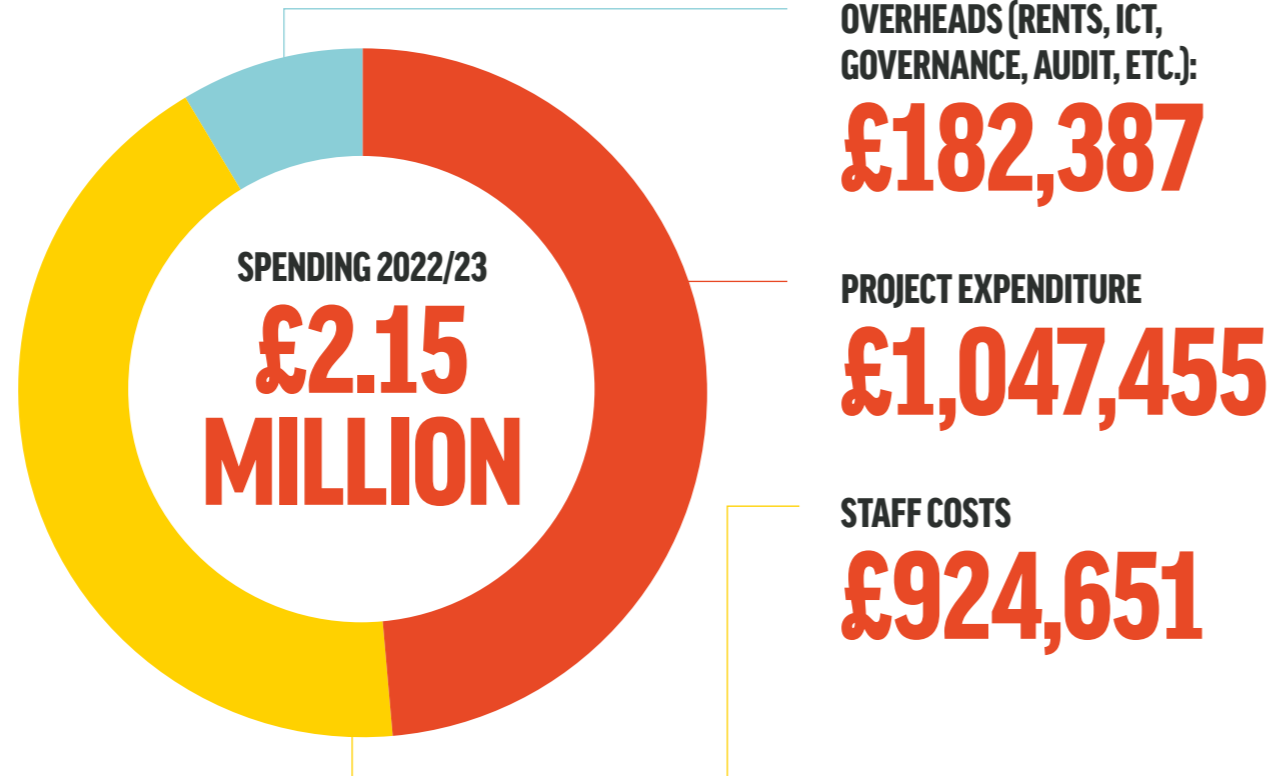
Our funding is a mix of consultancy and grant income, with a relatively small amount of donation and training income.





## SPENDING

We spent a total of **£2.15 million** in 2022/23.



## WHO FUNDED US

We believe in being transparent about the sources of our funding and purposes behind it. The following table sets out all of the funding we received during 2022/23 over £5,000.



### CONSULTANCY AND TRAINING INCOME IN 2022/23

FUNDER	AMOUNT	WHAT THE FUNDING WAS FOR
The RSPB (Royal Society for the Protection of Birds)	£549,011	People's Plan for Nature
UK Research and Innovation	£215,697	Sciencewise
Genomics England	£102,965	Newborn Genome Screening Public Consensus Building
Scottish Government	£50,444	Minimum Income Guarantee Experts by Experience panel
London Borough of Camden	£46,872	Citizen's Assembly - Evening & Night Time Economy
Impact Investing Institute	£37,490	Community engagement
West Midlands Combined Authority	£27,680	Net Zero Citizens Panel
Northern Gas Networks Ltd	£25,733	Public Panel
Co-operation Ireland	£25,377	Voice Matters/ Cooperation Ireland
Test Valley Borough Council	£25,050	Deliberative Engagement
Sheffield City Council	£24,705	Support and advice on the approach to public participation
UK Power Networks (Operations) Ltd	£24,698	Pilot People's Panel
SONI Ltd	£23,120	Community Forum
University of Exeter	£18,600	Enhancing Public Dialogue about School Inclusion pilot
The Democratic Society	£18,179	Engage Britain Panel 2
Royal Academy of Engineering	£16,520	Landscape review
University of Southampton	£16,000	Climate Assembly
London Borough of Camden	£14,625	Data Distributed Dialogue
Home Office Shared Service Centre	£14,138	Safe Space Coordinator
Queens University Belfast	£14,013	Car Dependency
London Borough of Camden	£13,800	Data Charter Panel II
London Borough of Camden	£12,960	Housing and Property Panel
Housing Rights	£12,463	Housing Rights
Social Care Wales	£11,817	Scoping future deliberation

University of Cambridge	£11,213	NIHR Bioresource
UK Biobank LTD	£10,250	Engaging Public with Biobanks
Genomics England	£9,450	Newborn Genome Screening Consensus Building
London Borough of Camden	£7,525	Facilitation Training
London Borough of Camden	£7,440	Deliberative Support
L & Q Group	£7,250	Tenant Engagement Training
University of Liverpool	£6,400	Data Strategy
University of Westminster	£5,000	Democracy Research Collaboration Toolkit

#### GRANT AND DONATIONS INCOME IN 2022/23

FUNDER	AMOUNT	WHAT THE FUNDING WAS FOR
Open Society Foundation	£274,456	Democracy Network
Esmée Fairbairn Foundation	£110,000	Local Climate Engagement
Forum for the Future	£106,296	Just Transitions
Calouste Gulbenkian	£100,000	Local Climate Engagement
The Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust	£81,702	Democracy Network
The Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust	£60,000	Core funding
Royal Society of Arts	£45,000	Rebooting Online Public Dialogue
Wellcome Connecting Science	£10,952	UK Citizens' Jury on Genome Editing
Greater London Authority	£8,500	Civic Data Innovation Challenge
Barrow Cadbury Trust and John Ellerman Foundation	£5,445	UPPER net zero thought leadership

# 08 LOOKING AHEAD

Throughout this report, we've showcased conversations which have shown us the best ways to create a better future. This includes conversations about nature, genetics and science, education, homelessness, and fair wages.

The nature of our work is always to look into the future. But we are proud that the work we have done this year has already improved life for people and institutions in the present. We are optimistic that there will be ongoing benefits. We hope to have aided those we have trained, those who took part in our processes, and all those across society with whom we have discussed our vision for a stronger democracy.

In 2023/24 — our 20th anniversary year — we will be building on our legacy and current work to create deliberative and participative processes, throughout our democracy, at greater depth and greater scale.

## THINGS TO LOOK OUT FOR IN 2023/24

### Shifting gear on advocacy, preparing for a General Election and beyond

In communities across all four countries of the UK, the need for a better way to determine our collective future is increasingly urgent. Whether it's the cost of living crisis or people's lack of hope, we need a change. Given this urgency, we will be stepping up our advocacy efforts. These efforts will focus on horizons far beyond electoral cycles. However, General Elections and changes of government are major opportunities to shift the level of understanding of and support for public participation and deliberation as an everyday, integral part of our democracy. So, we will be working hard with others in the sector to make the most of this political moment.

### Growing our impact

Our team has grown over the last 4 years from 12 to 26 people in 2023. We are increasing our focus on the impact we want our work to have, and how we can use lessons learnt on projects to go from strength to strength.

We will continue to champion others to do democracy. As part of this, we will continue to question what it means to be a citizen, a member of a community, or of society as a whole. We will help members of the public and decision makers work together to answer the key questions. What does it mean to be a part of the place where you live? How do you take part in making decisions? What do those future conversations sound like? What happens as a result?

## Grenfell

Collaborate CiC and Involve are currently working in partnership as the External Scrutiny Team, as part of the development of the 2024 to 2028 Grenfell Support Programme. We have been appointed as part of the Global Settlement Agreement, which requires a new fund of money to be spent to benefit the bereaved and survivors of Grenfell and the local community.

Our role is to work with bereaved, survivors and the immediate local community to scrutinise the consultation design and implementation. We'll be providing independent scrutiny of the consultation process rather than carrying out the consultation. We see our role as helping bereaved, survivors and the local community hold the Council to account, and making sure their voices are heard.

## Rebuilding trust

We need to rebuild public trust in politics, to safeguard the democracy we have and build the democracy of the future. This will take a generational effort. It requires our politics to better include and deliver for people across the UK. That is why we are calling for politics to put citizens at the heart of Westminster. This will help ensure decisions are better rooted in the experiences and ideas of people from different walks of life, and rebuild trust.

For example, one way to do this is by introducing citizens' juries, who are reflective of the public, to improve and enforce rules for MPs. This proposal is part of a wider programme of proposals to put citizens at the heart of Westminster. If you believe we need to rebuild trust in politics, and people from all walks of life should have a role to play in this, you can [sign up on our website](#) and get involved in these discussions. Or, if you think this is a bad idea, and want to let us know why — we're keen to hear from you too. We don't have all the answers — we need your ideas and energy too!



## GET INVOLVED!

**We're committed to transforming how our democracy works, but we know we can't do it alone.**

Here are some ways that you can get involved:

**[Join](#) one of our networks**

**[Sign-up](#) to our newsletter**

**[Follow us](#) on social media**

**[Donate](#) to us**

**[Contact us](#) if you need advice, want support or are interested in finding out more.**

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 [uk.linkedin.com/company/involveuk](https://uk.linkedin.com/company/involveuk)

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