

Extinction Rebellion UK: Citizens' Assembly Working Group – written evidence (FGU0005)

House of Lords Constitution Committee Inquiry into the Future governance of the UK

Q1.

1. Balance of power is certainly not optimal. Lacking even proportional representation, our electoral systems are designed to concentrate power and exclude people. There are insufficient checks and balances to hold the government to account as the ethical standards of the Nolan Principles are no longer adhered to. Increasing numbers of people do not feel it is worthwhile voting. Whilst proportional representation systems are better designed to disperse power, alone they will not avoid manufactured majorities leaving supporters of losing parties with no voice.
2. There is an increasing call, within the UK, for both proportional representation in the electoral political system and a demand for increased deliberative participatory democracy such as Citizens Assemblies. There is a need for people to be actively involved in the decision making that affects the lives they live. Diverse voices need to be around the table. It is no longer acceptable that a relatively homogenous group of privileged people make decisions from the top down. Human values, not party political divisive stances are what our time calls for particularly with regards to the Climate and Ecological Emergency which affects all of us.

Q2.

3. Challenges are all of those listed...inherited systems, reluctance to do anything but talk and consult about change...power of money, class etc.
4. **Any changes to constitutional arrangements, as well as adjustments to multi-level governance should be undertaken with input from an informed, deliberative process of representative citizens,** not party platforms or civil service. This citizens' assembly process should be well publicised and explained, allowing broader social engagement, and underpin the public legitimacy of outcomes.
5. Model: East Belgian independent, sortition based and informed citizens' assembly working alongside parliament. What was once a marginal proposal at democratic reform has now become a central part of the political process.
6. <https://medium.com/participo/how-ostbelgien-became-a-trailblazer-in-deliberative-democracy-62c3bb1fa560>
7. French speaking Brussels Parliament
Deliberative Committees: When parliament and citizens work together
8. <https://medium.com/participo/how-ostbelgien-became-a-trailblazer-in-deliberative-democracy-62c3bb1fa560>

Q3.

9. An appropriate question for a citizens' assembly to deliberate upon.

Q5.

10. Another question suitable for the collective intelligence of a citizens' assembly to

consider

Q6.

11. How effective they are depends on where you are standing. Town and Community Ownership Funds have been unfairly allocated by the government to benefit their electorate. An example of vested interest allocation with no transparency. These should be allocated by independent bodies - an argument for citizens' assemblies to hear the evidence and make the allocation.
12. It is time to implement participatory budgeting, increasingly used all over the world. A process of democratic deliberation and decision-making, in which ordinary people decide how to allocate part of a municipal or public budget. Participatory budgeting allows citizens to identify, discuss, and prioritize public spending projects, and gives them the power to make real decisions about how money is spent based on real on the ground knowledge and understanding.
13. We would really appreciate the opportunity to present our talk "What is a citizens' assembly" to the Constitution Committee, a lively, interesting and informative presentation which we could deliver on Zoom. After about half an hour we hand over to you for questions, comments, concerns and thoughts. Please email to arrange.
14. We look forward to a time when people and parliament work collaboratively for the well-being and future of all people and hope this Committee paves the way with input from a citizens' assembly, not as consultants but as active decision makers.

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