

Written evidence submitted by Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) (CAUK0007)

INTRODUCTION

- The Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) is pleased to make this submission to the BEIS Select Committee's inquiry on the 'Findings of the Report of Climate Assembly UK'.
- We would be available to discuss the points raised in this submission, our own experience of delivering deliberative democracy events over the last year, and the wider conclusions of the Environmental Justice Commission with relevance to this inquiry.

QUESTIONS SUBMISSION

1. Has Climate Assembly UK (both its process and recommendations) been helpful to your work (or the work of your organisation), and if so, how?

- In late 2020 and early 2021, IPPR delivered four citizens' juries in different parts of the UK designed to make recommendations on the action required to reach net zero and restore nature. Like Climate Assembly UK (CAUK), the Environmental Justice Commission's programme of deliberative democracy events was also conceived in 2019. Due to the impact of Covid-19, these juries became online-only events and were delivered after the conclusion of CAUK.
- The design of the CAUK process, and in some cases the evidence made available on the website, supported us in developing a comprehensive and accessible evidence base for our juries to engage with – including making use of videos from CAUK within our own sessions to elaborate on key points, particularly on the issue of 'fairness'.
- Our juries were designed to create the opportunity for specific communities, each with its own unique challenges and opportunities, to put forward their particular view on a fair response to reaching net zero and supporting a nature recovery. Although each of our juries has placed different emphasis on the action required within their communities, their conclusions support the overall findings of CAUK. This consistency in outcomes provides a compelling case for what a 'fair response' to the climate and nature crises looks and feels like to the public – and defining this will be the focus of the final report of the Environmental Justice Commission.
- Alongside their specific recommendations, the members of CAUK establish a set of themes that also sit at the heart of our work on responding to the climate and nature crises: the need for public engagement and involvement; the

requirement for action to both be and be seen to be fair; that changes must provide people with freedom and control over their own lives; that action will bring with it individual, social and economic benefits; and the need to protect and restore nature and the recognition of the links between these environmental emergencies.

2. What impact has Climate Assembly UK had across your sector, and more widely?

- By convening a climate assembly for the UK, the six Select Committees made a clear statement of the central role that the public must play in both setting the level of ambition for climate action and ensuring the required changes in people's lives are implemented in way that is publicly acceptable.
- The conclusions reached by CAUK's members make an important contribution to debates on what constitutes a fair and effective response to the climate crisis. They also demonstrate the potential for the UK in adopting a much more deliberative and inclusive approach to making policy.
- Across the sectors in which we work, the most notable and visible champions of the CAUK process and recommendations are the Climate Change Committee (CCC). The Sixth Carbon Budget makes repeated use of CAUK's recommendations within its assessment of how the UK could reach net zero. This considered application of the conclusions from a major deliberative event is to the credit of the CCC and means that the policies they propose are grounded in ideas that are likely to be publicly acceptable. CAUK's conclusions have had a clear impact on the UK's response to the climate crisis through the work of the CCC.
- We also welcome the emphasis given to the conclusions of CAUK by the Select Committees. For example, the Transport Select Committee made explicit reference to the conclusions of CAUK in the terms of its recent inquiry on electric vehicles and road user charging. The use of public deliberation as the basis for committee scrutiny and consideration of policy is a welcome development.
- CAUK has helped to popularise and give credibility to the use of deliberative approaches across the public sector. The recommendations have shown that the public has ambition for change and, if given the space and time, can get into the detail of policies and provide nuanced conclusions on their implementation. The quality of the conclusions reached by the members of the CAUK has made such deliberative events a more viable, attractive option for local authorities and governments considering localised or sectoral climate emergency responses. It also modelled good practice in event design and set an appropriately high bar for how to get rich insights from the delivery of such processes.

3. How do you perceive Climate Assembly UK to have affected the work of Government since the Assembly's report was published (10 September 2020)? To what extent do the Government's actions since then reflect Climate Assembly UK's recommendations?

- The government's continued lack of public response to the conclusions of the CAUK make it difficult to assess the extent to which their actions have been directly influenced by its recommendations.
- Many of the themes put forward by CAUK are now part of government rhetoric – the 'Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution' seeks to "increase ambition" and identifies areas for action that align well with many of the CAUK recommendations. The idea of economic 'co-benefits' for action are now incorporated in the government's response to the climate crisis and encapsulated in the repeated phrase that "green and growth can go hand-in-hand".
- However, it is difficult to find references to the conclusions of CAUK in any of the government's key strategies or policy announcements. Their lack of apparent use by government mean that these vital contributions would have been invisible within public policy making without the influence of, for example, the CCC and the Select Committees. This does a disservice to the effort of the CAUK members and the value of their informed and comprehensive conclusions.
- It is all too easy to look across the recommendations made by the members of CAUK and see good ideas that have not been acted on by government - increasing taxation for people who fly more often and further, making it easier for products to be shared and repaired, and, crucially as we seek to rebuild a greener economy, limiting or putting conditions on investment in high carbon industries in the response to Covid-19. The conclusions of the CAUK still offer many rich conclusions that government departments can, and should, be incorporating into their plans to fairly reach net zero.

4. What would a good response to Climate Assembly UK from the Government look like? What would a good response from Parliament look like?

- First and foremost, the government should issue a comprehensive response to the CAUK report and its recommendations. This reflects the members own request that there be a "follow-up up on the outcomes of the Assembly covering what has been taken into account, what hasn't and why".
- Secondly, government and Parliament should reflect on whether the current approach to responding to net zero embodies the CAUK members' desire for "the transition to net zero to be a cross-political party issue, and not a partisan issue." Although the need for action is recognised in law, the pace of change is slow and action can be stymied by competing agendas. Scotland's approach to reaching net zero by 2045 included establishing a Just Transition Commission to support government and parliament to consider how the principles of a just transition, as outlined in the Paris Agreement, can be embedded in the transformation of the economy. No such independent body exists for the UK and there is no central focus for these issues within current government strategy.
- Thirdly, the government should place a premium on the conclusions reached by the CAUK as being amongst the highest quality evidence of the public's hopes and concerns for reaching net zero and make these an explicit part of the

evidence base for government action – including referencing them within relevant strategies and investment plans.

- Fourthly, government and parliament must work together to make high quality public deliberation part of the culture of Westminster. Every department and committee will be devising or scrutinising net zero policies that will necessarily require changes in people's lives. The value, and necessity, of public involvement in these plans was noted repeatedly in the House of Commons debate on the CAUK report:

"Too often, we find ourselves in echo chambers...The assembly's work provided a rare opportunity to hear some of the quiet voices of people who had been given the information and had time to consider their recommendations." Lilian Greenwood MP

"...public acceptance of the huge changes required will be critical to their success. If we do not bring the public with us, the best laid plans will be doomed to failure." Jerome Mayhew MP

"The transition to a low-carbon economy is unavoidable, but the pace at which it happens in a democracy like ours and the extent to which it is orderly depends on the consent and, indeed, the active involvement of people and places." Matthew Pennycook MP

- Government should commit to hold more such deliberative events that tackle specific aspects of the transition to net zero. For example, devising a replacement to fuel duty and implementing national road user charging will touch the lives of a wide range of people – to be effective, fair and achieve the desired social and environmental outcomes, it will therefore be crucial to provide the public with a meaningful role in designing how this should work. Such events don't all need to be of the scale of CAUK; we need the right approach for specific challenges and questions.
- Finally, and linked to the need for public involvement in decision making, a good response by government would commit to acting on at least the top priority recommendation of the CAUK and a key theme of the report:

"Education and information: there is a need for information and education for everyone – individuals, businesses, government and others – about climate change and the steps needed to tackle it. It is essential for buy-in to the changes that are needed."

- This was central to the recommendations from our citizens' juries too:

"Awareness of the severity of the issue is essential. There are many people who aren't aware of the change that is needed. Much of the information we see is about the global situation. We need to hear more about the impact this will have locally and what role people can play in making change happen." *Jurors of the South Wales Valleys Climate and Fairness Panel*

“Communication is key to ensuring that good decisions are made and that the decision makers are held to account. How information is communicated should be tailored to meet the needs of different people within our communities. Information sharing should be two-way and there should be more accessible means of engagement.” *Jurors of the Aberdeenshire Climate and Fairness Panel*

- Government must treat the provision of high quality and accessible information to the public on the climate and nature emergencies as seriously as it does public health campaigns. We recommend that the Government establishes a new public communications plan for the climate and nature crises. Success would mean everyone having access to information on national commitments, and the progress made to achieve these, as well as locally relevant information that put both the necessary lifestyle changes and policy action into context.

ABOUT THE IPPR ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE COMMISSION

The Environmental Justice Commission was created in 2019 with the aim of working with people across the UK to develop policies and ideas that will tackle the climate crisis and restore nature as quickly and fairly as possible, and that put people and fairness at the heart of the response to the climate and nature emergencies. The Commission is co-chaired by Hilary Benn MP, Laura Sandys and Caroline Lucas MP, leading politicians from the Labour, Conservative and Green Parties.

ABOUT IPPR

IPPR, the Institute for Public Policy Research, is the UK’s leading progressive think tank. We are an independent charitable organisation with our main office in London. IPPR North, IPPR’s dedicated think tank for the north of England, operates out of offices in Manchester and Newcastle, and IPPR Scotland, our dedicated think tank for Scotland, is based in Edinburgh.

Our primary purpose is to conduct and promote research into, and the education of the public in, the economic, social and political sciences, science and technology, the voluntary sector and social enterprise, public services, and industry and commerce. Other purposes include to advance physical and mental health, the efficiency of public services and environmental protection or improvement; and to relieve poverty, unemployment, or those in need by reason of youth, age, ill-health, disability, financial hardship, or other disadvantage.

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