

# Democracy Matters

Lessons from the 2015  
Citizens' Assemblies  
on *English Devolution*

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Dear John

Over the past twelve months the Democracy Matters research team has been conducting a pilot project on the use of citizens' assemblies to explore complex elements of constitutional policy-making in the United Kingdom. The focus has been on English regional decentralisation, as covered in the Cities and Local Government Devolution Act, and two citizens' assemblies were convened in the North and South of England.

It is with great pleasure that I now submit the final report on this valuable research and engagement project. I hope you and your officials will find its content and recommendations valuable in a number of different ways.

Two main conclusions come from the research. First and foremost, there is an appetite amongst the public to engage in informed and constructive discussions about the future of British democracy and about specific policy proposals. The citizens' assemblies in Southampton and Sheffield have demonstrated that individuals from a range of backgrounds can and are willing to work together to plan a common future and to understand future challenges. Second, the research suggests that the public are generally supportive of the principle of devolution within England. The pinch-point is the nature of the model of devolution on offer from the Government and the lack of public engagement in the decision-making process as it has so far been conducted.

This is therefore a generally positive report. It is not about anti-politics, political disengagement or 'the politics of pessimism' and is instead focused on the creation of new forms of democratic engagement and new ways of 'doing' politics that resonate with modern expectations about transparency and involvement. On behalf of the project team and all those people who either supported or served on Assembly North or Assembly South I would like to commend this report to you for close consideration and would welcome a formal response.

Yours

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Matthew Flinders". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Professor Matthew Flinders  
Principal Investigator  
The Democracy Matters Project  
March 2016

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# Executive Summary

The **Citizens' Assembly pilots** on local democracy and devolution were the first of their kind in the United Kingdom. Organised by *Democracy Matters*—an alliance of university researchers and civil society organisations led by Professor Matthew Flinders—and funded by the UK's Economic and Social Research Council, the Assemblies took place in Southampton and Sheffield towards the end of 2015.

The motivation for running the pilots came from evidence of rising levels of democratic inequality: significant differences in democratic power and political behaviour generally associated with people's social background or demographics and a commitment to exploring how the gap that has emerged between the governors and the governed might be narrowed through the introduction of democratic innovations.

This commitment to 'stress testing' new methods of public engagement in politics and policy-making through social science research dovetailed with the fact that most party manifestos at the 2015 General Election proposed the establishment of some form of popular convention to examine constitutional issues. The Assemblies were the first attempt to put those ideas into practice.

A citizens' assembly is a group of citizens selected at random from the population (but 'stratified' to increase representativeness) to learn about, deliberate upon, and make recommendations in relation to a particular issue or set of issues. They are not politicians or representatives of civil society organisations or other groups—instead citizens' assemblies build on the idea of 'deliberative democracy': not just providing regular citizens with opportunities to participate directly in decision-making, but also enabling those citizens to engage with the issues in a thoughtful and informed way.

The citizens' assembly model has gained increasing attention around the world with major assemblies on constitutional issues being held in countries including Canada, the Netherlands, and the Republic of Ireland (the latter also including politicians as participants alongside citizens). A similar model—citizens' juries—has also been used by a number of local authorities in the UK to explore the public's view on very specific issues. This project was therefore the first major attempt in the UK to explore the capacity of the public to engage in broad and complex areas of constitutional policy on a larger scale.

What we have found is that citizens' assemblies offer a promising response to broader concerns regarding political disaffection and the withdrawal of certain sections of society from traditional forms of democratic expression. Although this was a pilot project and citizens' assemblies are not a panacea for the challenges of democratic governance, the existing research suggests that they offer a way of building new political engagement, legitimising decision-making and defusing apathy to some extent. They can also produce evidence-based recommendations that are shaped by a close understanding of the needs of local, regional or national communities and may therefore lead to more effective and efficient policy-making.

The debate in late 2015 concerning English devolution and decentralisation provided a perfect 'test case' for the analysis of these issues. It was a 'live', salient and complex issue that allowed the research team to offer a real and tangible focus for the assemblies. Moreover, the establishment of Assembly North (held in Sheffield) and Assembly South (held in Southampton) ran in parallel not just with the announcements of various 'devo deals' but also with the parliamentary proceedings of the *Cities and Local Government Devolution Bill* by *Government*. These developments provided a short and concrete

timeframe within which the assembly pilots would need to be completed if they were to contribute to political decision-making and public consultation. The fact that the lack of public engagement and consultation formed a central component of the wider political debate served not only to focus attention on this project but also to give the research team and assembly members a real sense of purpose and commitment. This commitment was under-pinned by a strong belief that the long-term sustainability of any 'devolution revolution' within England demanded popular support and strong democratic roots. As such, this project had two very clear aims:

- To investigate what members of the public in England think about devolution when they are actually given the opportunity to learn about and debate the issue in detail.
- To assess whether the creation of citizens' assemblies could improve the operation of democracy in the UK, and to build knowledge on how such assemblies might best be structured, scaled-up and delivered in the future.

Both assemblies were tasked with considering the devolution agenda in their area. Assembly North was a 'pure' assembly that involved only citizens as participants (i.e. the Canadian model). Assembly South was a 'mixed' assembly that involved citizens as well as politicians as participants (i.e. the Irish model). Both assemblies took evidence from those involved in city deal negotiations, local stakeholders and experts on devolution.

The assembly recommendations displayed a nuanced understanding of the devolution agenda. In Assembly South, participants were evenly split in their support for the current devolution proposals. They were divided on what kind of governance structure they wanted, with an elected assembly gaining the strongest support. They strongly endorsed the idea that any new devolved body should cover the Hampshire and the Isle of Wight area, with the integration of health and social care seen as the top priority. Assembly North was more supportive of the local devolution deal. However, participants' preferred option was a model of regional governance that embraced a larger geographical area, the creation of an elected regional assembly and more substantial powers. But overall the critical finding from both assemblies was a clear and significant appetite for far greater public involvement in the devolution deals being proposed. Citizens' assemblies provide just one mechanism for achieving informed and supported public engagement.

The citizens' assemblies showed that, when given a chance to assess the information available to decision-makers, to learn about the challenges and opportunities facing the country and to have a say and learn about the challenges and opportunities facing the country, there is an appetite for participation. The assemblies challenge the myth that people are irredeemably disengaged from politics—instead, people are more than capable of grappling with complex questions about the way we are governed. The assemblies also offered evidence in terms of building belief and confidence amongst members about their capacity to understand complex political issues and to feel that they

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could engage in a meaningful manner. Furthermore, not only did the individual participants go through a transformation by becoming more active citizens, there is also evidence of follow-on and longer-term growth in political engagement.

This pilot project has not answered all the questions, and like most good research projects it has probably stimulated more questions than it has answered. This in itself illustrates why theoretically informed but policy-relevant research really matters. Key areas for further work include: how to recruit and retain a more representative sample of the population; how digital platforms might enable assembly-type mechanisms to work on a broader level without undermining the nature and level of deliberation; and how the outputs of deliberative mechanisms feed into the traditional political structures in an effective way. Moreover, as the debate about the need for a national convention on the constitution

in the UK refuses to die away, there is clearly more to be learned about further up-scaling these large pilot assemblies onto a national stage where the span of issues might be wider and the political salience surrounding the assembly more intense. There is also more to be learned about how citizens' assemblies can become a sustainable feature of local government decision-making in the context of potential further devolution and decentralisation within England.

By creating the space for citizens to inform themselves about the issues and debate with each other, this project has shown the potential for a new kind of democratic politics. Assembly North and Assembly South therefore offer useful lessons for future UK-wide and local assemblies, whether a fully-fledged constitutional convention or smaller-scale events.

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## Conclusions and Recommendations

1. Citizens are ready, willing and able to take part in participatory and deliberative forms of democratic practice in relation to complex policy issues.
2. Citizens want stronger devolution with more public involvement. They want to feel part of 'the revolution in devolution' and not simply to have change imposed upon them.
3. Political parties, politicians and policy-makers will benefit from thinking more creatively about stimulating informed public engagement and about interacting 'with multiple audiences in multiple ways', both for the devolution debate, and in policy-making more generally.
4. Deliberative methods involve significant investment in terms of money, time, energy and relationship building but this should be viewed as a positive social investment that is likely to increase the efficiency of subsequent policies and decisions.
5. There was a clear and significant "spillover effect" from the citizens' assemblies, with many participants increasing their levels of local political engagement and online activity.
6. Citizens' assemblies should not be seen in isolation, but instead, if carefully designed, can become the driver of a far broader public debate about an issue, challenge or event.
7. Citizens' assemblies can not only change the individual attitudes and beliefs of participants, but also promote an increasing level of deliberation, confidence and listening as the assembly progresses.
8. Delivering high-quality, high-impact social science research demands that academics have new skills in relation to knowledge-production, knowledge -translation and knowledge-brokerage that span the traditional disciplinary boundaries and that includes an awareness of political and policy-making structures.
9. The timing of citizens' assemblies is critical for potential outcomes. These assemblies were conducted within the context of twelve month ESRC funding, the swift passage of enabling legislation through Westminster and the rapid announcement by Government of proposed 'devo deals'. To have current impact the pilots needed to be completed within three months, while more time for flexibility and adaptation would have assisted with emergent issues around resources recruitment, research limitations and realistic impact. 'Designing for democracy' is crucial and more work is needed in relation to recruiting assembly members that are representative of all sections of society; the role of politicians in assembly processes; and the relationship between the output of assemblies and the traditional political processes.
10. The citizens' assemblies, combined with knowledge from other deliberative initiatives, provide a rich source of learning to feed into a future constitutional convention for the UK.

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The 'Democracy Matters' research project was a joint venture that involved academics and practitioners working together closely from the very initial project design stages and also drew upon the expertise, energy and enthusiasm of a vast range of people. The project team would like to thank everyone who offered their time and commitment: without them it simply would not have been possible to deliver such an impressive piece of theoretically informed but policy-relevant research.

The project began and concluded at St George's House in Windsor Castle and the research team is indebted to the support and encouragement of St George's House and to its commitment to bringing about positive social change.

The Principal Investigator of this project was Professor Matthew Flinders (University of Sheffield). The co-investigators were Professor Will Jennings (University of Southampton), Professor Graham Smith (University of Westminster), Dr Alan Renwick (University College London), and Katie Ghose (Electoral Reform Society). Professor Gerry Stoker (University of Southampton), Edward Molloy (Electoral Reform Society), Dr Brenton Prosser (University of Sheffield) and Dr Paolo Spada (University of Southampton) were also key members of the research team. This team would like to acknowledge the contributions of Dr John Boswell, Lucy Parry and Dr Matt Ryan to the success of this project.

The two chairs of the assemblies, Peter Henley and Len Tingle, fulfilled their roles with good grace and humour over the residential weekends and the professional facilitator, Titus Alexander, played a key role in overseeing within the assembly activities. In light of the contemporary nature of this project and the rapidly changing political backdrop against which the assemblies were designed and delivered we are particularly grateful for the expert advice of Mark Sandford (House of Commons Library) and for his assistance in drafting a number of background and information papers. Mark was a constant source of information and inspiration for the project team.

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However, if the Democracy Matters project demonstrated one thing it was that deliberative events that aim to really engage with the public to promote open and engaged dialogue demand significant resources. Resources not just in the sense of finance but resources in the sense of helpers, assistants, volunteers, facilitators, and individuals who have a passion both for social scientific research but also for reaching-out beyond the lecture theatre and seminar room.

In this regard the Democracy Matters project was incredibly lucky to be able to draw upon a veritable legion of volunteers who really made the project such a huge success. Their contribution cannot be overstated as they made the assembly members feel at ease, sorted out lots of little problems that could have become annoying distractions, supported the deliberative process and generally projected a positive energy over the whole project. Indeed, one of the main areas of positive feedback from those members of the public who served on the assemblies has been praise for the volunteer staff.

In recognition of the contribution of these volunteers, we would like to list them by name:

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Last, but certainly no least, we would like to thank all the people who gave up so much time and energy to serve on the assemblies. This really was an exercise in 'democracy in action' that simply could not have worked if a large number of people had not been willing to 'step into the arena' themselves.

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# Chapter One: Introduction

Read this chapter if you are interested in:

- Issues around democracy and devolution in the UK
- What made the UK Citizens' Assemblies unique
- The origins, aims, processes and outcomes of these assemblies
- A quick guide to the parts of this report

1. The UK Citizens' Assembly pilots were the first of their kind in the United Kingdom. They were organised by *Democracy Matters*, a collaboration of university researchers and civil society organisations, with funding from the UK's Economic and Social Research Council.<sup>1</sup> What made these pilots unique was that they:
  - a) occurred at a time when issues of democracy, governance and devolution were prominent within political, parliamentary and public debate;
  - b) involved the first major political experiment with deliberative citizens' assemblies in the UK;
  - c) innovated by comparing two very different assembly models: the 'pure' (public only) and 'mixed' (combined public and politicians) models;
  - d) examined *process* (how to run assemblies that strengthen the quality of deliberation), *content* (UK citizen attitudes to devolution) and *context* (conducting assemblies in a traditionally centralised political setting); and
  - e) used mixed research methods to provide multiple perspectives on the assemblies and their outcomes.
2. This introduction sets out the democratic and political context for the project, offers an overview of the assembly pilots, and provides an outline of this main report.

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## 1.1 A Citizens' Assembly for the UK

### DEMOCRATIC CHANGE

3. Even the most cursory glance at the titles of recent books on democracy and politics suggests that something is not quite right. Titles such as *Why We Hate Politics*, *Hatred of Democracy*, *Can Democracy Survive?* and *Don't Vote – It Just Encourages the Bastards* provide a clear signal that the relationship between the governors and the governed is increasingly interpreted as failing. A gap therefore seems to have emerged between the public, on the one hand, and politicians, political processes and political institutions, on the other. Explaining the emergence of this gap is the topic of a burgeoning seam of research and scholarship and it is neither possible nor necessary to review this literature in this report. Indeed, it is sufficient to note that one key element of the democratic challenge is an issue of reconciling democratic change and democratic stability.
4. Some of the most prominent democratic changes relate to public attitudes and public behaviour. Traditional 'tribal' politics has increasingly given way to a more flexible approach. Non-traditional forms of political expression (both on-line and off-line) and 'new', 'insurgent' or 'anti-political' parties have risen. Institutions and institutional relationships have also changed, moving powers, roles and responsibilities from elected politicians towards other decision-makers. As Peter Mair's book *Ruling the Void* (2014) makes clear, if a 'democratic gap' increasingly exists between the public and elected politicians, then a related 'capacity gap' exists between elected politicians and the labyrinthine structures that together constitute the modern state.
5. Yet to talk of democratic change in a simple or zero-sum manner risks over-simplifying a complex phenomenon. The available research suggests that the 'democracy gap' is both widening and closing for different sections of society.<sup>2</sup> More precisely, levels of democratic inequality are rising as the economically wealthy and older sections of society vote with increasing frequency and reliability, whereas younger people and those in a more fragile economic position are voting less. This creates the risk of a vicious spiral of democratic decline in which the political system understandably responds to those sections of society most likely to vote, while the young and the poor become ever more convinced that democratic politics has little to offer them.
6. Rising democratic inequality—in the UK and beyond—raises a second issue: democratic stability. The UK has a long political tradition as a Westminster democracy, a majoritarian democracy, and a 'power hoarding' democracy. The political culture is relatively closed and elitist, public engagement has rarely been encouraged,

<sup>1</sup> These included the University of Sheffield, University of Southampton, University College London, the University of Westminster and the Electoral Reform Society. 'Democracy Matters: A Constitutional Assembly for the UK- A Comparative Study and Pilot Project', ESRC Grant Ref. ES/N006216/1.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, IPPR 2013. *Divided Democracy: Political Inequality in the United Kingdom*, [http://www.ippr.org/files/images/media/files/publication/2013/11/divided-democracy\\_Nov2013\\_11420.pdf?noredirect=1](http://www.ippr.org/files/images/media/files/publication/2013/11/divided-democracy_Nov2013_11420.pdf?noredirect=1)

constitutional blueprints have been rejected in favour of a preference for *ad hoc* adaptation and ‘muddling through’. Unlike many countries, the UK is not a place where wars, revolutions or crises have disrupted this political tradition or culture in the modern age. As a result, some argue that the emergence of British democratic disaffection is a result of the failure of its political system to evolve and keep pace with an increasingly dynamic and demanding population.

7. That is not to suggest that change has never occurred. For instance, the New Labour Governments of 1997–2010 introduced a raft of significant constitutional reforms. However, three issues tie those developments back to a pattern of democratic inertia, rather than democratic innovation. First, the reforms were enacted while attempting to retain the mainframe of a centralised and power-hoarding system. Secondly, no explicit statement of how the various reforms were intended to fit together or how the inevitable unintended consequences would be dealt with was ever offered. And finally—and most positively—the reforms introduced new ways of ‘doing politics’ at the sub-national level. These include

proportional electoral systems, new parliaments and public buildings, new working procedures, coalition governments, multi-party systems, and innovations in public engagement. In the light of these changes, Westminster politics at the national level has arguably looked increasingly outdated.

8. Not surprisingly, UK politicians from all sides have responded to such changes by calling for reforms of various kinds. Some of these proposed reforms are designed to give voters (at least the impression of) greater control over politics in Westminster, such as the greater use of referendums and the introduction of recall of MPs. The 2015 General Election also saw widespread demands for some kind of ‘popular convention’ on the constitution. Other reforms seek to decentralise or devolve powers away from Westminster, a shift that is supported by the leaders of all parties.
9. This project addresses both of these reform agendas. We examine how best to turn the rhetoric of popular conventions into reality. And we apply such procedures to the particular issue of devolution. The following sections explain these two aspects.

## WHY CITIZENS’ ASSEMBLIES?

10. Most party manifestos at the 2015 General Election proposed the establishment of some form of popular convention to examine constitutional issues. Labour said it would ‘set up a people-led Constitutional Convention’, the Liberal Democrats advocated ‘a UK Constitutional Convention, made up from representatives of the political parties, academia, civic society and members of the public’, and the Greens proposed ‘a Constitutional Convention led by citizens.’<sup>3</sup> UKIP also signalled support, though their manifesto did not mention the issue. The Conservatives were most sceptical, though they indicated that they were not closed to the idea.

11. The party policy-makers had a variety of models in mind. One important model, however, was that of the ‘citizens’ assembly’. The term ‘citizens’ assembly’ refers not to just any kind of popular gathering, but to a specific sort of institution, as defined in Box 1.1. It has two key features:

- a) First, the members of a citizens’ assembly are chosen at random from the general population. They are not politicians or representatives of civil society organisations or other groups. Nor are they the same vocal citizens who typically choose to turn up at public meetings, who may be passionately interested in public decision-making, but who are often unrepresentative of the wider community. Those who are invited to participate in a citizens’ assembly do have the option to decline this invitation and, given that some people are more likely to accept such an invitation than others, this means that some stratification of the sample is required. This is intended to ensure good representation of the population as a whole.
- b) Second, citizens’ assemblies draws from the concepts of ‘deliberative democracy’ and ‘deliberative innovations’: their purpose is not just to allow regular citizens to participate directly in decision-making, but also help those citizens engage with the issues in a thoughtful and informed way. They therefore build in substantial opportunities for learning over an extended period, and they structure discussion to ensure that all perspectives are heard and carefully listened to. In this way, they go far beyond focus groups or even most citizens’ juries, where such opportunities are either absent or limited.

### Box 1.1: Citizens’ Assembly: Definition

A citizens’ assembly is a group of citizens who are selected at random from the population (with stratification) to learn about, deliberate upon, and make recommendations in relation to a particular issue or set of issues.

12. The citizens’ assembly model has gained increasing attention in academic literature and has been applied with considerable success in Canada, the Netherlands, and Ireland (see Table 1.1). Its advocates claim it has a number of notable advantages over other kinds of political processes:

- a) By engaging people other than those who choose to put themselves forward for elections or those who choose to attend public meetings, it extends participation in detailed policy discussions beyond very narrow, unrepresentative groups.
- b) By focusing on people who are not tied to election manifestos or agreed organisational positions, it allows the members to engage freely in discussion and deliberation, in which they can listen to and interrogate the arguments and make up their minds on the basis of what they hear.
- c) By providing opportunities for detailed learning and by structuring the discussions to be both deliberative and inclusive, it enhances the likelihood that conclusions are well informed and based on careful consideration of a range of arguments and evidence.

<sup>3</sup> Labour Party manifesto, p. 63; Liberal Democrat manifesto, p. 133; Green Party manifesto, p. 60.

**TABLE 1.1:  
EXAMPLES OF  
PREVIOUS CITIZENS'  
ASSEMBLIES**

	British Columbia	Ontario	Netherlands	Ireland
Membership	160 citizens	104 citizens	140 citizens	99 citizens + 33 politicians
Dates	Sept 2003 – Dec 2004	Sept 2006 – Apr 2007	Mar – Nov 2006	Dec 2012 – Feb 2014
Topic	Electoral reform	Electoral reform	Electoral reform	10 aspects of constitution
Meetings	10 plenary weekends + public hearings	12 plenary weekends + public hearings	10 plenary weekends	8 plenary weekends + public hearings

13. In these ways, advocates of citizens' assemblies argue that they offer a promising response to democratic malaise: they provide a way of narrowing the 'democracy gap' without succumbing to the populist demand that even uninformed and unreflective public views be followed. Advocates hope that the use of citizens' assemblies alongside existing political institutions would also help legitimise decision-making and to some extent defuse antipathy towards traditional representative organs, and that they would lead to recommendations that are genuinely well grounded.
14. Given the rise in interest in citizen engagement it is important to assess whether such claims are justified or not and whether they hold up in the particular context of the UK. These goals are central to the purposes of this project. As outlined in further detail below, we seek also to explore *how* citizens' assemblies can best be structured and operated.

## WHY DEVOLUTION?

15. The decision to focus the citizens' assemblies on devolution was relatively straightforward. At the broadest level there has been growing evidence of public apathy and disengagement from traditional forms of political engagement. At a more specific level, New Labour's 'constitutional revolution' unleashed a devolutionary dynamic that increasingly demands a response in relation to the future of English governance. More specifically still (but no less importantly), there is a sense that English devolution could help deliver economic growth; help address economic disparities across the country; and respond to certain democratic challenges. The first two of these drivers were critical in relation to the post-2015 Conservative Government's commitment to devolving powers to elected 'metro mayors' who would enjoy far-reaching powers over economic development. The theme of English devolution was further spurred forward by the Scottish independence referendum of 18 September 2014 and Prime Minister Cameron's statement the following morning in which he articulated a need for a new territorial settlement in the UK – one that devolved power not just to the constituent nations, but also to the English regions. He said:
16. The Conservative Government has taken the English devolution revolution forward with great speed since its unexpected re-election in 2015 (see Table 1.2 below). Within days of the election, the Chancellor of the Exchequer reiterated his calls for a 'Northern Powerhouse' and made it clear that any part of England could submit a proposal for devolved powers. This announcement sparked a flurry of activity, with local areas attempting to build alliances and submitting bids for devolved powers. A deadline of 4 September 2015 was set for proposals to be taken into account in the autumn 2015 Spending Review. This sparked immediate interest, no doubt helped by the additional funding put on the table, and the Government reported that 38 bids had been received by the deadline. A number of proposed 'devolution deals' were agreed between the Chancellor and council leaders in the following months.
17. Meanwhile, the *Cities and Local Government Devolution Bill*, which enables some of the changes envisaged in the proposed devolution deals, began its parliamentary journey on 28 May 2015. A principal area of criticism during parliamentary scrutiny concerned the lack of public engagement in the reform process. Nevertheless, the government forged ahead, and the bill received royal assent on 28 January 2016.
18. Devolution will continue to be debated for many years to come. 'Devo deals' will continue to be proposed, signed, and revised, and processes of implementation and funding will be complicated and contested. The role of public engagement in this process is unclear: public and parliamentary criticism contends that previous central Government consultation has been insufficient and future consultation appears flawed. Indeed, recent research highlights that the major feature missing from devolution debate is democratic discourse.<sup>4</sup> This suggests that the long-term sustainability of any 'devolution revolution' remain unclear: such change needs popular support and strong democratic roots to be sustained.

“

*It is absolutely right that a new and fair settlement for Scotland should be accompanied by a new and fair settlement that applies to all parts of our United Kingdom... I have long believed that a crucial part missing from this national discussion is England... It is also important we have wider civic engagement about how to improve governance in our United Kingdom, including how to empower our great cities.*

”

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.neweconomics.org/publications/entry/democracy-the-missing-link-in-the-devolution-debate>

19. It is into this unfolding devolution process that the 'Democracy Matters' research project makes its contribution. The two pilot citizens' assemblies have allowed the views of English citizens on 'devo deals', 'metro mayors' and other forms of local or regional governance – from micro-level 'hyper-localism' to centralized national decision-making – to be gauged. Moreover, this novel experiment in democratic engagement gives voice to previously unheard sections of society. The views expressed have, in turn, been fed into policy-making processes.

20. Therefore the decision to focus the citizens' assemblies on devolution was important not only as part of ongoing

governance and constitutional debates, but because the assemblies can make a relevant contribution to decision-making in the here and now. Thus, the issue of English devolution has provided a test bed in which to examine new forms of democratic engagement. This project assesses how far citizens' assemblies can combine democratic voice with democratic listening. It assesses how learning and thinking about issues can be nurtured amongst the public in an inclusive and supported manner. It assessed the long-term impact of such processes in terms of changing attitudes, building confidence and enhancing what Sir Bernard Crick would have termed 'political literacy' amongst the public.

**TABLE 1.2:  
TIMELINE  
ON ENGLISH  
REGIONAL  
DEVOLUTION  
SINCE MAY 2012**

Date	Event
May 2012	Referendums on elected mayors in ten major cities
July 2012	City Deals approved in the eight Core Cities
31 October 2012	Publication of the Heseltine Report (No Stone Unturned), including proposals for 'metro mayors'
18 March 2013	Publication of Government response to Heseltine Report
June 2013	Announcement of Growth Deals to be managed by Local Enterprise Partnerships
September 2013 – July 2014	City deals approved with twenty second-tier cities
March 2014	LEPs submit Strategic Economic Plans to access Growth Deal funding
23 June 2014	George Osborne speech proposing conurbation mayors in context of 'Northern Powerhouse'
7 July 2014	Agreement of Growth Deals with all LEPs
18 September 2014	Scottish independence referendum
22 October 2014	Publication of final report from RSA's City Growth Commission
3 November 2014	Greater Manchester Agreement (1)
12 December 2014	Sheffield City Region Devolution Agreement (1)
27 February 2015	Greater Manchester health and social care agreement
18 March 2015	West Yorkshire Devolution Deal
28 May 2015	<i>Cities and Local Government Devolution Bill</i> published
8 July 2015	Greater Manchester devolution agreement (2)
21 July 2015	<i>Cities and Local Government Devolution Bill</i> passes through House of Lords
27 July 2015	Cornwall Devolution Deal published
4 September 2015	Deadline for 'devolution bids' for Spending Review 2015
5 October 2015	Sheffield City Region Devolution Agreement (2)
23 October 2015	North-East and Tees Valley devolution deals published
17 November 2015	West Midlands and Liverpool devolution deals published
28 January 2016	<i>Cities and Local Government Devolution Bill</i> receives Royal Assent
23 March 2016	New devolution deals announced in the Budget for East Anglia, Greater Lincolnshire and the West of England with further powers announced for Greater Manchester and Liverpool

## PROJECT AIMS AND QUESTIONS

21. Based on the political context just outlined, this project had two overall research aims, which guided its design:

- to assess whether the creation of citizens' assemblies could improve the operation of democracy in the UK and to build knowledge on how such assemblies might best be structured and run;
- to investigate what members of the public in England think about devolution when they are given the opportunity to learn about and debate the issue in depth.

22. Through the processes of pursuing these aims, we sought also to examine the practicalities and politics of research 'co-production', where academics and practitioners collaborate in designing and delivering a research project. In respect of the first of these aims, we sought to test out the claims made for citizens' assemblies by their advocates and probe the concerns of their detractors. Specifically, we examined the following questions:

- 
- a) How easy is it to secure *representativeness* in a citizens' assembly? Past citizens' assemblies have employed expensive methods of recruitment in order to secure representative samples. We sought to examine the degree to which lower-cost methods can be used to achieve the same objective.
- b) What is the *quality of deliberation* found within a citizens' assembly? Do members engage effectively with each other by listening to, respecting, and responding to each other's points? Do they develop good understanding of the issues? Or, conversely, do their deliberations and conclusions suggest that ordinary members of the public are not able to deal with such complex policy matters?
- c) What is the *effect of participation on assembly members*? Advocates of assemblies argue that they positively affect members' attitudes towards politics and desire to participate in politics. By contrast, some detractors are concerned that participation in such events may undermine citizens' acceptance of traditional representative institutions. We sought evidence on these differing views.
- d) What is the *effect of the assembly on wider discourse* around the subject that the assembly explores? Do policy-makers regard the assembly's conclusions as deserving respect or do they dismiss them? How do the media respond?
23. Building on what we know from citizens' assemblies elsewhere, the project considered these questions for the particular context of UK politics.
24. In addition, we sought to examine the impact of variation in the design of citizens' assemblies. The key variation is the difference between 'pure' and 'mixed' citizens' assemblies: pure assemblies comprise only citizens, whereas mixed assemblies include a minority of politician members alongside the majority citizen members. Pure assemblies have been employed in Canada and the Netherlands. The Irish Constitutional Convention of 2012–14, however, adopted the mixed model: two thirds of its hundred members were randomly selected citizens, while one third were politicians chosen by the political parties.
25. The main argument for the mixed model is that it increases the likelihood that politicians will take the assembly's conclusions seriously: the politician members may act as ambassadors for the assembly's recommendations. Unless tied to binding referendums (as in the two Canadian cases), there is a concern that assemblies with only citizens have no formal link to decision making institutions and their recommendations will be ignored. In comparison, the Irish Constitutional Convention has spurred one very prominent change: the adoption of same-sex marriage (although other recommendations have not had similar impact). By contrast, the main arguments against the mixed model are that they hamper the quality of deliberation in the assembly: politician members may be too inclined simply to toe the party line, and they may tend to dominate the discussions.
26. Given that both the pure and the mixed models are present in the debate around citizens' assemblies in the UK, the Democracy Matters project was structured to assess their relative merits. As outlined in the following section, we ran two assemblies, one pure, the other mixed. Our analysis of results explores the difference between them.
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## 1.2 The UK Citizens' Assemblies: *Origins and Context*

27. The origins of this project go back to a meeting held at St George's House, Windsor Castle, in November 2014, which gathered around fifty people to examine the issue of political disengagement and launch a new consultation entitled 'Changing Politics – Towards a New Democracy'.<sup>5</sup> The participants included community organisers, politicians, journalists, academics, senior civil servants, think tank representatives, political parties, polling companies and faith groups. The central theme emanating from these discussions was that 'democracy matters', but that new spaces, processes and mechanisms of democracy are needed to reconnect large sections of society. In particular, the idea crystallised of a need to think about the nexus between traditional ways of doing politics and the emergence of more fluid, issue-focused and localised pools of democratic energy.
28. Although the fact that discussions regarding the nature and creation of a 'new democratic settlement' were taking place in private within the grounds of a Royal Castle did not go unnoticed, the setting actually provided a remarkable 'democratic moment' in the sense that participants were united by the belief that talking on its own was not enough, especially when it took place among individuals who were already democratically active and engaged. The St George's House sessions sparked a desire for action and a commitment to launch an actual project to test dominant assumptions about the public's relationship with democracy and how new democratic innovations could be established, delivered and connected to the traditional political processes and procedures of politics.
29. The result was the 'Democracy Matters' research project as the platform through which to fund, deliver and analyse citizens' assemblies in the UK. This was novel as the UK is (in)famous for its centralised, power-hoarding democracy, lacking an extensive participatory public or political culture. Furthermore, although experiments with citizens' juries and other 'mini publics' have taken place at the local level, their creation on a larger scale to explore complex constitutional proposals was a unique experiment in British democracy. Within weeks of the initial St George's House event, an application was submitted to the ESRC's Urgency Grants scheme to take this research agenda forward.
30. The project was originally conceived as a pilot for a later UK Constitutional Convention. As noted above, in paragraph 10, most political parties advocated the establishment of such a convention in the wake of the 2014 Scottish referendum and continued the call in their manifestos for the 2015 General Election. The unexpected election of a Conservative government with a working parliamentary majority, however, shifted the focus from this broad constitutional debate to the more specific issue of the continuation of devolution and the city deals that had emerged since 2012. While there continued (and continues) to be public debate and campaigns for a citizen-led constitutional convention process in the UK, the devolution debate did not undermine the

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.stgeorghouse.org/consultations/social-and-ethical-consultations/recent-consultations/changing-politics-towards-a-new-democracy/>

need to trial new forms of political engagement. If anything the nature of the Government's approach to 'metro mayors' and 'devo deals' created concern about a new 'democratic deficit'. Just days before Assembly North was due to begin in South Yorkshire, a proposed deal was suddenly announced between the Government and the Sheffield City Region. The secretive process leading to this

announcement sparked considerable controversy. Scope for public engagement within the process was uncertain at this time, but it was clear that local public ratification by referendum was not part of the plans. In this context the citizens' assemblies could make an important contribution to public engagement and consultation around the proposed Sheffield devolution deal.

## ASSEMBLY STRUCTURE

31. The Table 1.3 sets out the basic details of the two citizens' assemblies. We will explore the structure and working of the assemblies in greater detail in Chapter 2.

**TABLE 1.3:**  
**COMPARING**  
**ASSEMBLY**  
**DESIGN AND**  
**COMPOSITION**

	Assembly North	Assembly South
Target membership	45 members of the public	30 members of the public + 15 local politicians
Actual membership	32 members of the public	23 members of the public + 6 local politicians
Area from which members drawn	South Yorkshire (Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham and Sheffield council areas)	Solent region (Southampton, Test Valley, New Forest, Winchester, Eastleigh, Fareham, Gosport, Portsmouth, Havant, East Hampshire, and Isle of Wight)
Meeting location	Sheffield	Southampton
Meeting dates	17–18 October and 7–8 November 2015	24–25 October and 14–15 November 2015
Topic	Future of local/regional governance in the area	Future of local/regional governance in the area
Key assembly recommendations	<p>Directly elected assembly for Yorkshire &amp; the Humber with substantial powers</p> <p>Measures to enhance public participation in local and regional decision-making</p> <p>Reject proposed Sheffield City Region devolution deal, but continue to work for a better deal</p>	<p>Directly elected assembly for Hampshire and the Isle of Wight</p> <p>Priority given to powers over the integration of health and social care</p> <p>Members evenly split on support for current devolution proposals in the area</p>

## 1.3 Research Methodology

32. Beyond holding the two assemblies themselves, The Democracy Matters project have conducted research employing a wide range of methods in order to maximise the insights that we can derive from these events. Our quantitative data include:

- data from surveys filled in by those invited to participate during the recruitment process;
- demographic data on assembly members;
- data from member surveys conducted at the start and end of each assembly weekend;
- observation records from small-group discussions.

Our *Qualitative* materials include:

- responses to open-ended survey questions from assembly members;
- assembly documents (including schedules, minutes, briefing documents and emails);
- recordings of assembly meetings (both plenary and small-group discussions)
- materials produced by small-groups and observation records;
- researcher reflection audits.

We discuss our research methods further in the analysis of research findings in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5.



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# Chapter Two: Assembly Membership

Read this chapter if you are interested in:

- The recruitment process and who attended the UK Citizens' Assembly pilots.
- The challenges of recruitment and retention.
- The issue of incentivising public engagement and how this project approached this issue.
- The potential role of external consultants and polling companies in undertaking recruitment tasks for citizens' assemblies.

33. Without its members, a citizens' assembly does not exist. But recruiting a representative sample of citizens is a complex task. In this chapter, we begin by outlining our recruitment procedures, then present the recruitment outcomes, and finally discuss lessons

learned. As noted above, our aim was to recruit 90 participants, split evenly between the two assemblies. We intended that the 'pure' Assembly North would involve 45 citizens, while the 'mixed' Assembly South would include 30 citizens and 15 politicians.

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## 2.1 Recruitment Procedures

34. Following a competitive tender process, we selected the online opinion research company YouGov to recruit the citizen members. To recruit politicians in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, we

commissioned the Southern Policy Centre, which has strong contacts in the relevant networks across the region.

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### RECRUITMENT PROCESS – CITIZENS

35. Recruitment of citizen members was based on YouGov's panels in the areas of Assembly North (South Yorkshire) and Assembly South (the Solent region, comprising the Southampton, Portsmouth and Isle of Wight area). In both cases the panels comprised around 5,000 potential participants.

36. Through discussion of the nature of these panels and the practical possibilities for stratification, we decided to stratify for gender and age (over or under 40 years), while ethnicity and political affiliation would be monitored without setting thresholds. We considered but excluded other stratification criteria because of the complexity of fulfilling multiple requirements in small groups.

37. Working with YouGov, we developed a five-step recruitment process. This was designed to fulfil three objectives: to enable respondents to make informed decisions about whether they wanted to participate in an assembly; to recruit the required number and diversity of participants; and to maximise the likelihood that those recruited would in fact attend. The five steps were as follows:

a) Potential participants in the two panels were first asked to complete a survey. This asked generic questions, including whether respondents knew what citizens' assemblies were, whether they would be interested in participating in one in their area, and whether they would be available on the proposed dates. It also included questions about attitudes to politics

drawn from the British Election Study, allowing us to analyse the sorts of people who did or did not express interest.

- b) A second survey, sent to those who expressed interest in the first, then asked specific questions about willingness to be involved, including whether people could commit to both assembly weekends and were willing to be contacted by YouGov with more information. A positive response to this last question and the provision of a contact phone number was recorded as a 'yes' response.
- c) At the third stage, 'yes' respondents were emailed with detailed information about the assembly in their area, including dates, times, transport, accommodation, catering, potential compensation and a FAQ sheet on other practical details, as well as an overview of university ethics requirements.
- d) Fourth, in the two weeks before the assembly, research team members worked with YouGov to call all potential participants by phone. This was intended to re-confirm attendance, lift retention and answer any questions.
- e) Finally, a third survey was sent just days before the first assembly meeting asking whether participants were still coming and providing a phone number for any last-minute questions. A positive response to this email was used to ascertain final numbers on the evening before each assembly.

38. This plan was implemented largely as intended, although the final recruitment outcomes fell somewhat short of our goals. After survey one, the process was on target. From the 650 people who completed the survey in the Assembly North area, 111 consented to the next stage, of whom 61 were women, 46 were aged less than 40 and six were representatives of black or ethnic minority (BME) groups. In the Assembly South area, 645 completed the survey and 113 consented, with 51 women, 44 aged less than 40 and 4 BME. After survey two, 46 people in the north and 31 in the south had provided a contact phone number. It was not possible to oversample because of booking limits on hotel rooms: we did not want to invite a participant and have to turn them away later.
39. However, subsequent email and phone contact identified that the requirement to attend both weekends was a barrier for some. Anecdotally, phone calls indicated that people were excited about the opportunity to be involved, but family or prior commitments prevented them from doing so. Subsequent analysis by YouGov

- found that some potential participants did not take the call because they do not answer callers with an unfamiliar number. This could have further reduced the response rate.
40. In response, YouGov initiated another phase of recruitment where they blocked panel members in the regions from completing any other surveys until they had completed a new survey that combined the previous two. This strategy was ultimately successful, as at the end of the phone call phase we had reached the recruitment targets, with 45 participants in the north (with gender balance, but only six people aged under 40 and only one person from a BME background) and 31 in the south (again with gender balance, but with only seven people aged under 40 and four from BME backgrounds).
41. The following days saw some attrition, which YouGov attempted to redress by drawing from the additional survey groups. On the evening before the event, YouGov reported that 42 participants were confirmed for Assembly North and 31 for Assembly South.

## RECRUITMENT PROCESS – POLITICIANS

42. The recruitment process for politicians also went largely according to plan. Potential local councillors – all drawn from city, borough and district councils in the Solent region – were invited to participate by the Southern Policy Centre and were selected

to be broadly representative of the party balance of elected officeholders across the region. In the days leading up to the first Assembly South weekend, fourteen councillors had agreed to attend, just below our target of fifteen.

## RECRUITMENT OUTCOMES

43. On the first morning of Assembly North, of the 42 participants whom YouGov reported confirmed, 32 attended. At Assembly South, of the 31 confirmed citizen members, 23 attended; of the fourteen confirmed councillors, just five attended (a high no-show

rate), and one more was recruited in the last day before the event. These councillors represented the Conservatives, Labour, the Liberal Democrats and UKIP.

## WHO PARTICIPATED?

44. It is possible to benchmark the representativeness of participants against those people who were contacted but declined the invitation to participate and against the general population of Great Britain (using the British Election Study's *Post-Election Face-to-Face Survey* and *Internet Panel Study* which enables comparison against attitudinal as well as demographic features). We have conducted extensive analysis of the demographic profile of our participants and summarise the key findings here.

45. **Age:** The most notable difference between assembly participants

and those people who were invited but declined to participate and the general population is the small number of adults in the 18-25 and 36-45 age brackets. In contrast, older age groups (56-65 and 66+) were over-represented. These specific profiles likely reflect the difficulties of securing the participation of younger people and people with childcare responsibilities, whereas older and retired people are more willing or able to participate. Oversampling of younger people is recommended for future citizens' assemblies, along with potential use of incentives to increase the overall size of the pool.

**TABLE 2.1:**  
**RECRUITMENT**  
**ANALYSIS**  
**BY AGE**

Age group	Assembly Participants (YouGov)	Invited, but declined to participate (YouGov)	British Election Study Internet Panel Study	British Election Study face-to-face survey
Under 18			1%	1%
18-25	2%	7%	13%	8%
26-35	13%	19%	13%	14%
36-45	7%	17%	14%	16%
46-55	18%	17%	17%	18%
56-65	34%	20%	23%	18%
65+	25%	20%	18%	25%



46. **Gender:** In terms of gender, participants were slightly more likely to be men compared to the sample who received the initial invitation to participate as well as than the general population. This

gender gap is driven by Assembly South, where 39% of participants were female, whereas in Assembly North there was a perfect balance of men and women (50% each).

**TABLE 2.2:  
RECRUITMENT  
ANALYSIS BY  
GENDER**

Age group	Assembly Participants (YouGov)	Invited, but declined to participate (YouGov)	British Election Study Internet Panel Study	British Election Study face-to-face survey
Female	45%	54%	52%	54%
Male	55%	46%	48%	46%

47. **Income, education and ethnicity:** Overall the income distribution of participants was similar to that for the sample of citizens who were invited to participate but declined. There is also not much difference in the level of education between the assembly members and non-participants. The same proportion left school at 16 or earlier (31%), while slightly more left education at 20 or later (45% compared to 38%). In terms of ethnic diversity, the assemblies were largely composed of White British or White other participants, though this

did not differ much from the invited sample, though there is more divergence from the ethnic composition of the local populations of the Sheffield and Solent regions. A further lesson of this exercise is that achieving representative samples for small groups can be challenging. Where ethnic minority groups make up a small percentage of the population, either the sample needs to be larger to ensure their inclusion or targeted over sampling for minorities is necessary.

**TABLE 2.3:  
RECRUITMENT  
ANALYSIS BY  
INCOME**

Gross household income	Participants (YouGov)	Invited, but declined to participate (YouGov)
under £5,000 per year	4%	2%
£5,000 to £9,999 per year	5%	4%
£10,000 to £14,999 per year	15%	7%
£15,000 to £19,999 per year	7%	7%
£20,000 to £24,999 per year	9%	8%
£25,000 to £29,999 per year	2%	9%
£30,000 to £34,999 per year	13%	6%
£35,000 to £39,999 per year	9%	7%
£40,000 to £44,999 per year	4%	6%
£45,000 to £49,999 per year	0%	4%
£50,000 to £59,999 per year	2%	6%
£60,000 to £69,999 per year	4%	4%
£70,000 to £99,999 per year	7%	5%
£100,000 to £149,999 per year	0%	1%
£150,000 and over	2%	1%
Don't know	9%	6%
Prefer not to answer	9%	19%

**TABLE 2.4:  
RECRUITMENT  
ANALYSIS BY  
EDUCATION**

Age finished education	Participants (YouGov)	Invited, but declined to participate (YouGov)
15 or under	2%	10%
16	29%	21%
17-18	18%	22%
19	4%	5%
20+	45%	38%
Still at school/Full time student	2%	4%
Can't remember	0%	0%

**TABLE 2.5:  
RECRUITMENT  
ANALYSIS BY  
ETHNICITY**

Ethnicity	Participants (YouGov)	Invited, but declined to participate (YouGov)
White British	90.9%	93.8%
Any other white background	5.5%	2.5%
White and Black Caribbean		0.4%
White and Black African		0.2%
White and Asian		0.2%
Any other mixed background		0.5%
Indian		0.2%
Pakistani		0.1%
Bangladeshi		
Any other Asian background		0.1%
Black Caribbean		0.2%
Black African		0.3%
Any other Black background		
Chinese		0.5%
Other ethnic group	1.8%	0.5%
Prefer not to say	1.8%	0.5%

48. **Political interest/participation:** Where our participants do differ considerably from the general population is as regards their interest in politics and level of political participation. Specifically, on average our participants considered themselves highly attentive to politics, with a mean of 9.5 on a scale of 0 to 10, compared to 7.4 for the sample of participants in Sheffield and the Solent who were invited to attend but declined to participate. There is an even larger gap with the general population of GB, as measured using the British Election Study face-to-face survey,

where the average is 5.1. In terms of voter turnout 94% of our participants had voted at the 2015 General Election, compared to 90% of the respondents who declined to take part and compared to the official turnout for the 2015 General Election which was 66.1%. Unrepresentativeness in terms of political interest is not especially surprising given the time commitment involved in the assemblies, the technical nature of the discussion, the lack of coverage in the media and the lack of monetary compensation.

**TABLE 2.6:  
RECRUITMENT  
ANALYSIS BY  
POLITICAL  
INTEREST**

How much attention do you generally pay to politics (0 to 10)	Participants (YouGov)	Invited, but declined to participate (YouGov)	BES face-to face survey, 2015
Average	9.5	7.4	5.1
Median	9.5	8	5

Did you vote in the past elections?	Participants (YouGov) – refers to 2015	Invited, but declined to participate (YouGov) – refers to 2015
Yes	94%	90%
No	6%	10%

49. **Partisanship:** the final criterion against which assembly representativeness can be assessed is the party affiliation of participants. There was a slight over-representation of Labour and UKIP voters among our participants, and under-representation of Conservative voters, compared to those who were invited but declined. Because the polls have recently tended to include

too many Labour voters and too few Conservatives, it is possible that the over-representation of Labour supporters and under-representation of Conservatives may have been slightly greater than suggested here. Nevertheless, while the assemblies did not achieve a perfect partisan balance, it did ensure a broad coverage of affiliation.

TABLE 2.7:  
RECRUITMENT  
ANALYSIS BY  
PARTISANSHIP

Party	Participants (YouGov) – 2015 election	Invited, but declined to participate (YouGov) – 2015 election
Conservative	22%	25%
Labour	38%	30%
Liberal Democrat	11%	11%
UKIP	18%	13%
Green Party	4%	8%
Other	4%	2%
Don't know	0%	4%
Not asked	4%	8%

50. Three features of these recruitment patterns require consideration: first, high attrition rates at each stage of the process; second, the underrepresentation of certain groups; third, the tight timescales these pilot assemblies were operating within meant that targeted recruitment of under-represented groups once the initial recruitment had been undertaken was not possible. Moreover, a key finding of these pilots was that despite a huge amount of investment in implementing a sophisticated recruitment plan you do not know who will actually turn up on the day. Indeed it is also important to emphasise the difficulties caused by not having access to participant information until the first morning and having

to do hotel, ethics, disability, media, legal etc all at once without disrupting the participants. More broadly, getting the public to volunteer to engage in these sorts of deliberative exercises appears to be getting more difficult. This may suggest the need for monetary incentivisation (i.e. paying people to attend) or other inducements. However, what this project also revealed was that once members had been recruited and had actually turned-up at the first weekend to discover a friendly and professional event then retention was not a problem: for the second weekend Assembly North lost just one participant and Assembly South just four (including one councillor), all due to sickness.

### Box 2.1: Recruitment – *Lesson Learning*

1. Pre-assembly recruitment is a critical phase and one that needs careful thought and planning.
2. Attending citizens' assemblies is obviously going to be more difficult for those who may have caring responsibilities, be self-employed, have young children, etc.
3. Getting those people that have agreed to attend to actually turn up on the day is a key challenge.
4. Little things matter: personal contact between members of the research team and potential assembly members is crucial, as is being available to answer questions or respond to concerns.
5. Polling companies can play a valuable role in supporting recruitment but their panels and lists will usually reflect a specific section of the public who have agreed or volunteered to work with them.
6. The targeted and strategic recruitment of under-represented sections of society might be necessary to fine-tune the composition of an assembly.
7. Response rates to invitations to participate on assemblies and similar initiatives are notoriously low and appear to be getting lower, especially amongst traditionally under-represented sections of society. The framing of the initial invitation is therefore critical, as is some consideration to the use of financial incentives.

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# Chapter Three: Assembly Processes

Read this chapter if you are interested in:

- An overview of the different phases of the UK Citizens' Assembly pilots
- Detail of what happened on each weekend of each assembly
- How the two assemblies evolved and differed from each other
- The common outcomes between the assemblies

51. Assembly North and Assembly South each met for two weekends to explore the future of local governance in their areas. As noted in Chapter 1, citizens' assemblies differ markedly from traditional consultations, focus groups, and even many events labelled as 'citizens' juries' in the degree of attention they pay both to building members' knowledge of the issues in hand and to ensuring members can deliberate freely and carefully upon the available options. The assemblies' discussions were structured in order to advance these purposes. Three features deserve particular attention.

- a) The work of the assemblies was structured into three key phases: learning, consultation, and deliberation.
- b) The work was conducted through a wide variety of activities to suit the different ways different people prefer to learn and express themselves.
- c) Before the assemblies began their work on devolution, and throughout their discussions, we placed an emphasis on building a strong sense of community.

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## 3.1 Principles of Assembly Design

52. The UK citizens' assemblies took as their model the citizens' assemblies that have previously taken place in Canada, the Netherlands, and Ireland. The basic features of those earlier

assemblies were briefly introduced in Chapter 1 and are considered further here.

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### BUILDING ON PREVIOUS ASSEMBLIES

53. In terms of operating modes, the three Canadian and Dutch assemblies shared certain key features: they tackled a single issue (in all cases, electoral reform); they met for weekend-long sessions (Friday evening to Sunday lunchtime); and they worked across ten to twelve plenary weekends (and also held various consultation meetings around the province or country) spread out over at least half a year. Their time was divided into phases of learning, consultation, and deliberation:

- a) During the *learning* phase, assembly members learnt about the various options (electoral systems) that might be considered, the criteria that might be used to evaluate them, and how to go about evaluating them in terms of those criteria.
- b) In the *consultation* phase, assembly members attended public meetings where anyone could express their views and also met with representatives of a wide variety of groups. Written submissions could also be made.
- c) In the *deliberation* phase, the assemblies thought through all that they had heard, considering again the values that they wanted to pursue and gradually working towards a view as to the systems that would best advance those values. They then voted on their recommendations.

54. The Irish Constitutional Convention also met over a series of weekends, but differed from the earlier cases in other respects. It had a much larger agenda, comprising eight specific aspects of the constitution and two further areas that it added itself. This meant that it could for the most part spend only one weekend on each issue. These weekends were structured into periods of learning, consultation, and deliberation, but these were necessarily much more truncated than in Canada or the Netherlands.

55. Ideas about a popular constitutional convention in the UK have presumed that such a convention would have extended time to examine matters in depth. We therefore sought to approximate the Canadian and Dutch model of lengthy discussions so far as possible. However, we recognised the costs of long-form deliberation and were also concerned that it would be harder to secure members' commitment over so many weekends for an unofficial assembly with no guaranteed role in decision-making processes. We therefore originally envisaged the UK assemblies as each lasting for four weekends, and subsequently found it necessary to reduce this to two weekends in order to keep within our financial and other restraints.

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56. Nevertheless, the two-weekend structure still allowed us to test out various features of long-form deliberation. The learning, consultation, and deliberation phases could be clearly delineated and given worthwhile time. The gap between the weekends allowed the assembly members to reflect on the issues in their own time, reading briefing papers and discussing matters among

themselves via our Facebook group (see below). This gap also allowed members to request further information from the research team and suggest additional speakers for the second weekend, giving the opportunity to exert some influence over the course of the assemblies' discussions. Having two weekends also allowed us to gauge rates of retention from the first to the second.

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## DESIGNING ASSEMBLY BUSINESS

57. Citizens' assemblies seek to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to develop their understanding and their views, and to express themselves, be listened to, and be taken seriously. But different people learn in different ways, and different people also feel more or less comfortable in expressing themselves in different contexts. In designing a citizens' assembly, it is essential to accommodate this diversity. Building on the practices of the previous citizens' assemblies and other deliberative exercises, we did this in three main ways.

58. First, we ensured that assembly business alternated between plenary and small-group sessions: that is, between periods when all members of the assembly worked together, and other periods when small groups of members—typically between five and seven—discussed matters among themselves. We generally used plenary sessions, for example, to deliver presentations, as well as to receive feedback from the groups. We used small-group sessions to allow members to discuss their reactions to presentations,

undertake collective tasks, consider questions they would want to put to expert witnesses, and develop their own thinking.

59. Second, we sought to vary the activities of the assemblies as much as possible. Plenary sessions included, for example, presentations with varying amounts of audience interaction, Q&A periods, and opportunities for groups or individual assembly members to feed back to the assembly as a whole. Small-group work included games and 'speed-dating' sessions with witnesses, as well as discussions on specified questions. We also provided written materials, as well as maps, charts, and other visuals.

60. Third, we facilitated discussion with the aim of ensuring that all assembly members felt able to participate on equal terms. Each small group had a facilitator (and a note-taker). Our facilitators (most of whom were graduate students from the Universities of Sheffield and Southampton) were trained to encourage a listening approach in their groups and to help all members take equal part.

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## ESTABLISHING AND MAINTAINING A COMMUNITY

61. Strong community is an essential part of any citizens' assembly: members are asked to spend extended time together, so they must feel comfortable in the group and want to be part of it. Past assemblies have begun weekend meetings on Friday evenings to allow members to interact informally over dinner and post-dinner activities before getting to work the following morning. Our budget made this impossible. We did, however, devote part of the first Saturday morning in each assembly to ice-breaking activities, through which the members began to get to know the other members of their small groups. We also shared meals and breaks, and research team members sought to chat with assembly members as widely and as often as possible. We gathered for a sit-down dinner each Saturday evening.

62. The previous assemblies also highlighted the importance of establishing shared values and group ownership as the foundations for successful deliberation and decision-making. We therefore devoted part of the first morning to discussing the values that the assemblies would need to respect in order to function effectively. We presented the values agreed in Ireland (openness, fairness, equality, efficiency and collegiality) and then allowed time for small groups to consider these, fleshing them out and amending them or adding to them, as members felt necessary. From this, each of our two assemblies developed its own core operating values.

63. These specific design elements were parts of a broader strategy for building and maintaining community that rested on three main pillars: regular reinforcement of the significance of member involvement; constant positive and personal contact; and ready access to refreshments. Several further elements of our approach sought to advance the same ends:

a) Each research team member took on a variety of 'community roles'. These included the 'interested professor', who noted the novelty of academia for many citizens and the power of genuine interaction, the 'floating charmer', who sought to lift flagging spirits, the 'friendly (non-academic) ear' to hear complaints confidentially and report them to the research team, and the 'progress spotter', who monitored movement towards outcomes, spotted when the group started to tire, and identified potential tensions.

b) We sought to maintain interaction between assembly weekends through emails, Facebook posts and easily accessible web resources.

c) We designed in multiple opportunities for reflection and feedback (both formal and informal) by members. These included assembly steering groups, whose members were elected by their assembly peers. They met with the Academic Directors over breakfast on the Sunday mornings to feed back on the direction of the assembly and experiences of the participants.

64. It is also worth reiterating the importance of making logistics 'invisible'. Members will not be in the mood to deliberate if they are worried about their luggage or their room, or if they are hungry or too hot. We put great emphasis on avoiding logistical problems and on responding quickly when they did arise.

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## ASSEMBLY SUPPORT TEAM

65. As the preceding paragraphs imply, running citizens' assemblies well requires the effective performance of a wide variety of tasks. We discuss administrative aspects of the assemblies in further detail in Chapter 7. It is worthwhile at this stage, however, to note the support team around each assembly.
66. Each team had three lead members: Academic Director, Assembly Chair and Main Facilitator. The Academic Director was responsible for developing, sculpting and delivering the schedule. The Chairs guided each assembly through the scheduled activities in a timely

fashion and reminded members of the broader significance of their work. The Main Facilitator trained and led the team of facilitators and guided the Academic Directors in engaging participants, facilitating learning, and applying appropriate pedagogical approaches. Beyond these individual roles, three further roles were fulfilled for the most part by student volunteers. These were the roles of small-group facilitator, note-taker, and logistical supporter, and they are discussed further in Chapter 7. The importance of these roles was one of the clearest lessons of the assembly pilots.

### BOX 3.1: Key Insights from the Building Phase

1. It is crucial to meet and welcome assembly members right from the beginning of the process.
2. Attention to detail (in terms of name tags, luggage storage, expense claims, refreshments, etc.) is really important so that assembly members can focus on the task at hand.
3. Citizens' assemblies are resource intensive in terms of the number of support staff required and also in relation to the quality of facilities.
4. Informal interaction is crucial and provides 'safe space' in which further discussions can take place.
5. Creating time and space for the assembly to discuss and agree its own principles and rules for taking the assembly forward is crucial. The event should be led by Assembly members, not researchers or support staff.
6. Encouraging the assembly to elect its own steering group that was responsible for feeding back comments and ideas from the assembly to the organisers worked very well.
7. Expect things to go wrong. Citizens' assemblies tend to be high-emotion, high-stress events, especially in the early phases when a new group of randomly selected people are getting to know each other. Flexibility, adaptability and resilience are therefore key (as is a sense of humour).

## 3.2 Phases of Assembly Business

67. We now outline the work of the two assemblies in greater detail, breaking it down into the three phases: learning, consultation, and deliberation. By way of illustration, the schedule of Assembly North is summarised in Box 3.2 (below). Assembly South's schedule

differed slightly from this, particularly in weekend 2, reflecting lessons learnt from the earlier assembly, the different course of the discussions and different preferences of assembly members (see Box 3.3 below).

### Box 3.2: Assembly Schedule: *Assembly North*

#### WEEKEND 1: LEARNING AND CONSULTATION

Saturday (10–17.30)
<b>Morning</b>
Survey of members Introductions (small groups) Setting values and ground rules (small groups and plenary) Reflection on experiences of local government (small groups and plenary)
<b>Afternoon</b>
Introduction of core questions (plenary) Expectations of local government (small groups) Local government now (lecture and small groups)

Sunday (9.30–15.00)
<b>Morning</b>
Introduction to reform options (plenary and small groups) Hearing and questioning witnesses* on options (plenary) Generating further questions for witnesses (small groups)
<b>Afternoon</b>
Question time with witnesses (plenary) Reflections on options (small groups) Requests for further information (small groups and plenary) Survey of members

\* Witnesses: John Mothersole (Chief Executive of Sheffield City Council); Mike Emmerich (ex-Chief Executive of think tank New Economy); Arianna Giovannini (Huddersfield University); Cllr Sioned-Mair Richards (Sheffield City Council); Andy Mycock (Huddersfield University); Nigel Slack (community advocate).

#### WEEKEND 2: FURTHER CONSULTATION, DELIBERATION AND DECISION-MAKING

Saturday (10.30-17.00)
<b>Morning</b>
Survey of members Thoughts since Weekend 1 (small groups and plenary) Recap and report on members' requests (plenary) Hearing from witnesses** (plenary) Witness speed dating (small groups)
<b>Afternoon</b>
Hopes and fears for devolution (small groups) Prioritising powers for a devolved body (small groups and plenary) Geographical scope of a devolved body (small groups and plenary) Vote on geographical scope

Sunday (9.30–15.00)
<b>Morning</b>
Governing structure of a devolved body (small groups and plenary) Vote on governing structures Discussion of additional issues for voting (small groups and plenary)
<b>Afternoon</b>
Vote on further issues Discussion of proposed Sheffield deal (small groups and plenary) Vote on proposed Sheffield deal How can we take the message out? (small groups and plenary) Reflections on the process (small groups and plenary) Survey of members

\*\* Witnesses: Peter Davies (former Doncaster mayor); Sir Stephen Houghton (Leader, Sheffield City Region); Dr Tim Moorhead (Sheffield Clinical Commissioning Group); Diana Wallis (former MEP and representative of Yorkshire First).

## Box 3.3: Assembly Schedule: *Assembly South*

### WEEKEND 1: LEARNING AND CONSULTATION

Saturday (10–17.30)		Sunday (9.30–15.00)	
<b>Morning</b>		<b>Morning</b>	
Getting to know each other (small group) Setting values and ground rules (small group and plenary) Experience of local government (small group and plenary)		Reviewing options (small group) Generating questions (small group) Hearing and questioning witnesses* (plenary) Generating further questions (small group)	
<b>Afternoon</b>		<b>Afternoon</b>	
Local government now (lecture) Expectations of local government (small group and voting on priorities) Options for reform: devolution deals, regional assemblies, neighbourhood decentralisation (lecture and small group)		Question time with witnesses (plenary) Reflections on options (small group) Requests for further information (small group and plenary)	

\* Witnesses: Cllr Stephen Godfrey (Leader, Winchester City Council); Cllr Steven Lugg (Chief Executive of the Hampshire Association of Local Councils); Mike Smith (ex-Director Finance and Executive Director, Southampton City Council); Dr Joannie Willett (University of Exeter)

### WEEKEND 2: FURTHER CONSULTATION, DELIBERATION AND DECISION-MAKING

Saturday (10.30-17.00)		Sunday (9.30–15.00)	
<b>Morning</b>		<b>Morning</b>	
Thoughts since Weekend 1 (small group and plenary) Recalling options and HIOW devolution prospectus (lecture) Hearing from witnesses** (plenary) Witness speed dating (small groups)		Voting on devolved body – Objectives – Geography – Governing structure Revisiting hopes and fears (small group and plenary) Open space (small group and plenary)	
<b>Afternoon</b>		<b>Afternoon</b>	
Hopes and fears for devolution (small group) Prioritising objectives for devolved body (small group and plenary) Geographical scope of devolved body (small group and plenary) Governing structure of devolved body (small group and plenary)		Voting on open space statements How can we take the message out? (small group and plenary) Reflections on the process (small group and plenary) Results of votes	

\*\* Witnesses on topics requested by participants: Mike Emmerich (ex-Chief Executive of the Manchester think tank New Economy on Manchester devolution deal); Cllr Roy Perry (Leader, Hampshire County Council and signatory of the HIOW devolution prospectus); Dr Matt Ryan (University of Southampton on devolution around the world); Prof. Gerry Stoker (University of Southampton on democratic accountability); Willie Sullivan (Director of Electoral Reform Society Scotland on Scottish devolution).



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## LEARNING PHASE

68. Citizens' assemblies seek conclusions based upon informed, careful deliberation. An important step was therefore the 'learning phase', when assembly members received, discussed and questioned extensive information on local governance options.
69. The research team prepared briefing materials ahead of the assembly meetings with the assistance of experts, researchers, policy officers and practitioners. These were made available to the assembly members online before the first weekend, and hard copies were provided on the first morning. These papers summarised current local government arrangements, outlined a variety of reform options, and provided other background information (see Appendix D for full list). A number of 'plain language' introductory videos were also made and placed online. These materials were resources for members to use as they wished: it was never assumed in scheduled activities that members had read them.
70. Much of the first weekend of each assembly was devoted (after introductory and community-building activities) to learning. Plenary sessions were used to convey core information about current local governance arrangements and a range of reform options. The exact nature of these sessions varied with the style of the discussion leader, but we mixed up approaches to maintain interest, energy and engagement, particularly when the matters being discussed were complex or when members tired towards the end of the day. These plenary sessions were interspersed with small-group discussions, allowing members to reflect on what they heard and relate it to their own perspectives.

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## CONSULTATION PHASE

71. The consultation phase of the citizens' assembly pilots aimed to connect the assembly members with the range of public views on devolution options. It was divided between the two assembly weekends. For the first weekend, the research team invited a diverse array of speakers to each weekend who offered a broad range of perspectives. They included local councillors and council officials, experts from universities and think tanks, and campaigners. For the second weekend, we asked assembly members the kinds of people or the kinds of opinion they would like to hear more of, and we sought out appropriate speakers in response.
72. The exact format of these sessions varied across the assembly weekends, but in all cases speakers gave brief presentations and assembly members were able then to quiz them. Wherever time permitted, we allowed members to reflect in small group on what they had heard in the presentations before asking questions. This was intended to ensure that all members could take part equally and to allow members to consider their questions carefully.
73. These activities were two-way: members gained exposure to a range of views; and presenters could hear back members' questions and concerns. As many of the presenters were involved in the process or scrutiny of the devolution negotiations in some way, this was an avenue for informal but direct impact.

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## DELIBERATION PHASE

74. The deliberation phase allows assembly members to work through the information and arguments available to them, develop their own thinking, and come to conclusions. In fact, much deliberation was contained in the phases already described: members were encouraged constantly to reflect on and discuss what they heard, asking questions and developing ideas during the first weekend and via the Facebook group between the assembly weekends. But dedicated time was also provided in the second weekend for further collective reflection.
75. The deliberation phase was structured slightly differently in the two assemblies. In Assembly North, we broke the subject of local governance into four broad aspects – the geographical scale of any new regional body, the structure of such a body (whether, for example, there should be an elected mayor, an elected assembly, and/or other possible arrangements), the powers of such a body, and any other aspects of such a body (such as its electoral system and the rules governing its functioning) that assembly members chose to highlight. On each of these, we sought ideally to begin with small-group discussion to allow members to gather thoughts, then have a plenary session to agree a framework for considering the issue and a ballot paper for voting, then hold further small-group discussion so that members could work towards their own considered conclusions, and finally take a vote by secret ballot. In some cases this process was slightly truncated, either because time was short or because members felt they had already debated these matters sufficiently. Through this process, members were able to come to recommendations as to their optimal arrangement for local and regional governance in South Yorkshire. Finally, members also discussed and voted on their position towards the existing proposals for devolution to the Sheffield City Region.
76. In Assembly South, deliberation and decision-making in the second weekend took a slightly different form. The deliberation phase began with small group discussion of 'hopes and fears' for devolution. These were fed back to the assembly via a plenary and post-its on walls that members could read and add to during the rest of the weekend. The afternoon of the first day was then divided into three small group and plenary discussions on prioritizing objectives (or powers) for any devolved body, its geographical scope and its governing structure. Out of these discussions three ballot papers were agreed. In the morning of the second day, members voted on the three issues. Not surprisingly, the forthcoming ballots were the subject of much informal discussion over dinner and breakfast. Aware that members had a range of other concerns beyond the three votes, we facilitated an open space for the remaining period of the Assembly. Members were asked in small groups which issues they would like to discuss. These were collated and split over two sessions. Members were able to pitch their ideas and other members chose which discussion group they would like to join. Groups varied in size and were asked to generate a proposal that could then be voted on by all Assembly members to gauge the degree of support. Finally, the members were asked to vote on whether they supported the devolution deal proposed by local councils, enterprise partnerships and national parks.

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### 3.3 Post-Assembly Activity

77. While a positive member experience of citizens' assemblies is a contribution to stronger democracy in itself, ongoing democratic activity is also an important measure of the success of the assembly pilots. Assembly members have been able to maintain their involvement since the conclusion of the second assembly weekend in a variety of ways:
- a) After the assembly meetings ended, we merged the two assemblies' Facebook groups in order to create an online community able to discuss ongoing developments in devolution policy.
  - b) Many members have pursued opportunities individually to engage their local elected representatives or their local communities with the issues that the assemblies discussed and with the concerns many members shared with the current devolution proposals.
  - c) We organised a further event at St George's House, Windsor Castle in January 2016. This was an opportunity for members of the two assemblies to meet each other and share experiences, for the research team to thank assembly members for all their work, for further information to be recorded on members' post-assembly experiences, and for key messages to be transmitted to external stakeholders.

#### BOX 3.4: Key Lessons

1. Breaking the assembly process up into a number of clear and designated phases is crucial for both the organisers and the participants.
2. However, the specific content, focus or structure of each phase may have to be altered at short notice as the organisers respond to the demands of the assembly, or they perceive a shift in atmosphere.
3. Flexibility within a clear framework is therefore a critical balance that must be achieved.
4. It is important to have role-clarity within each of these phases and to be clear about the aims and objectives of each component session.
5. Time must also be allowed between each session for small group and plenary reflection and discussion. It is easy to overload an assembly!

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# Chapter Four: Assembly North - *Discussions and Conclusions*

Read this chapter if you are interested in:

- The results of Assembly North in relation to questions surrounding the geographic scale of devolution.
- The assembly's views on the various options in terms of the governance of English regions.
- What participants thought about the powers and policy areas that should be vested at the regional level.
- How these views compared with the members' views on broader range of possible constitutional reforms.
- Whether the assembly felt – overall – that the 'devo deal' on offer should be accepted or rejected in favour of an attempt to secure an improved deal.

## 4.1 Assembly North

78. Assembly North focused on the question of how the South Yorkshire area should be governed. We structured this discussion into three broad areas:
- a) Scale: If a tier of government is to be created above the level of the current local authorities, what area should it cover: for example, South Yorkshire, or a broader definition of the Sheffield City Region including parts of Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire, or Yorkshire as a whole, or the North of England?
  - b) Structures: If a tier of government is to be created above the level of the current local authorities, what should the structure of decision-making be within that tier: for example, should there be an elected mayor held to account by local councillors, or a mayor accountable to an elected assembly, or an elected assembly without a mayor?
  - c) Powers: What powers – if any – should be exercised at each of the current or possible future levels of government: at the national level, at a regional level, at the level of current local government areas, and at the level of communities smaller than the current local councils?
79. In addition, Assembly members were able to place further aspects of the system of local governance on the agenda. Finally, given that the Assembly opted for a system that would be substantially different from the one currently proposed in the devolution deal, the Assembly also voted on its stance towards to the proposed Sheffield City Region deal. The Assembly discussed all of these issues in detail, and during the second weekend, voted on them in a series of ballots.

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### THE SCALE OF A REGIONAL TIER

80. The first question to be voted on asked 'If a regional body is to be created in our area, what parts of the region should it include?' The decision to take this vote first reflected the wish of the Assembly members: the Democracy Matters team originally envisaged that a vote on powers would come first, but it became apparent that this would be incompatible with how many members' preferences were structured.
81. The system currently proposed by government and local council leaders is for a devolution deal covering the Sheffield City Region. The four local council areas of South Yorkshire (Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham, and Sheffield) are full members of the Sheffield City Region, while one council in north Nottinghamshire (Bassetlaw) and four in Derbyshire (Bolsover, Chesterfield, Derbyshire Dales, and North East Derbyshire) are associate members. The Assembly members therefore discussed and voted on whether to include each of these areas. In addition, interest was expressed by Assembly members in both a Yorkshire-wide tier of government and a tier covering the whole of the north of England. These options were therefore included in the discussions and votes.

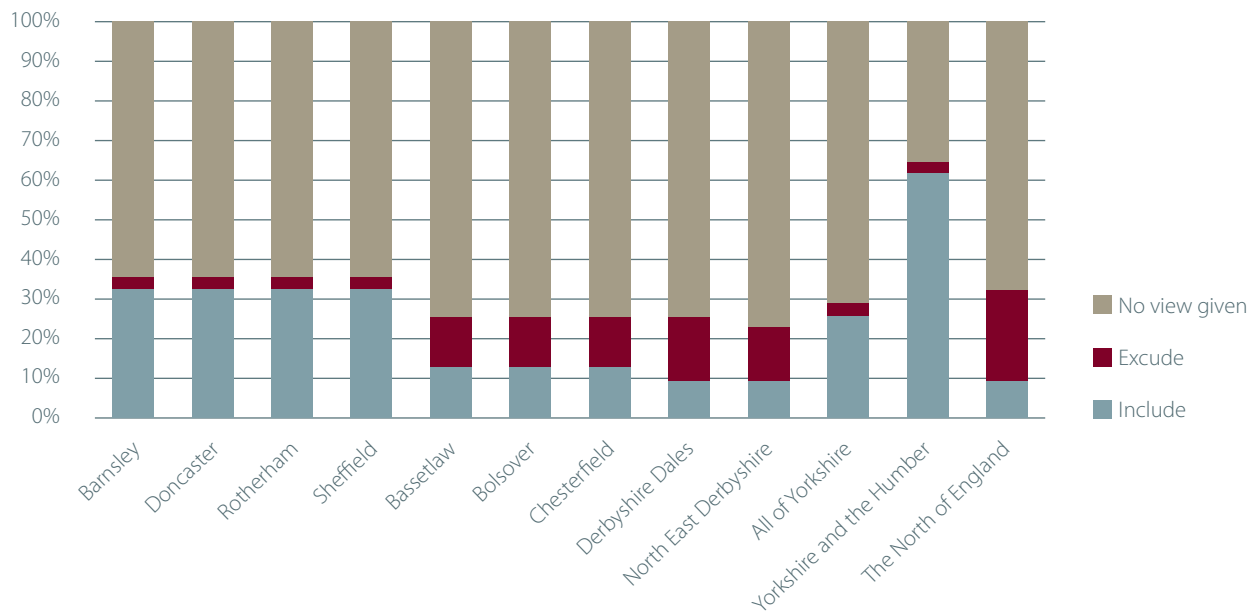
82. The results of the vote on these issues are shown in Figure 4.1. In summary:

- a) The results reveal a clear majority preference for a regional tier of government covering Yorkshire as a whole.
- b) The vote included two options for the definition of this area: Yorkshire in its traditional boundaries; or Yorkshire and the Humber, including North and North East Lincolnshire. The majority favoured the latter.
- c) Nevertheless, a sizeable minority did not support the Yorkshire-

wide option. The other option that attracted significant support was that of a South Yorkshire body.

- d) There was little support for inclusion of any parts of Derbyshire or Nottinghamshire. This represents, of course, the view of a group from South Yorkshire. The case for including neighbouring areas to the south was raised by some witnesses and discussed to some degree, but not debated in detail.
- e) There was also little support for a body covering the whole of the North of England.

**FIGURE 4.1: VOTING ON THE SCALE OF A REGIONAL TIER**



Note: Assembly members were able to vote for as many or as few options as they wished. Some options were left blank by most members. The figures are percentages of the 31 members present for the second weekend.

83. On the basis of this vote, the Assembly proceeded to devise a plan for a body covering Yorkshire and the Humber. That a significant minority preferred a South Yorkshire body should, however, be recognised.

## THE STRUCTURE OF A REGIONAL TIER

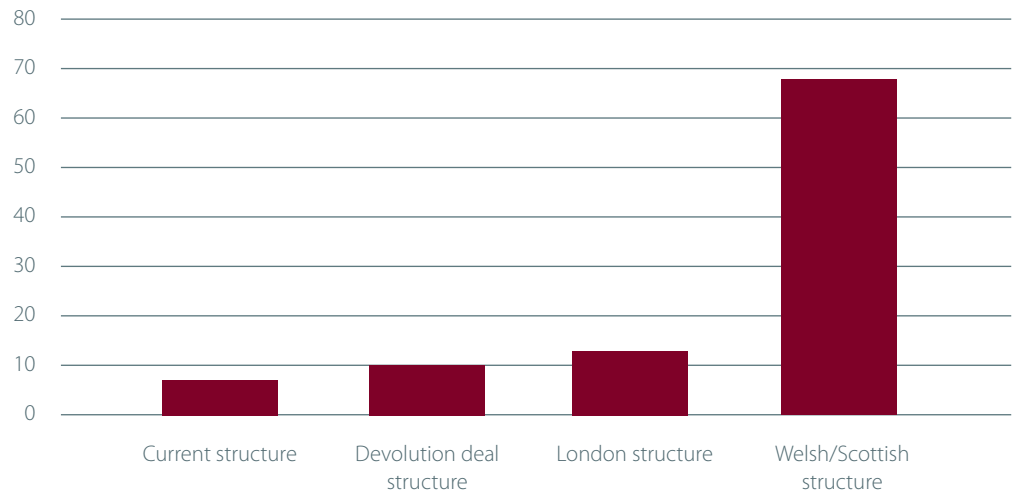
84. The Assembly voted next on the structure that a Yorkshire regional tier should have. Building on the preceding discussions, four options were taken to the vote:

- a) the current structure before the implementation of any devolution deal: a combined authority, in which the leaders of local authorities in the area make decisions together, with scrutiny from other councillors;
- b) the structure proposed in the devolution deal: a directly elected mayor heading a combined authority with council leaders, and with scrutiny from other councillors;
- c) the London structure: a directly elected mayor who works closely with local councils but is not formally tied to them, with an elected regional assembly holding him or her to account;
- d) the Welsh/Scottish structure: an elected regional assembly, which votes on major issues, and which chooses a 'First Minister' to form the regional executive.

85. In order to ensure that the result of the vote accurately reflected members' preferences, this vote was held using the alternative vote (AV) electoral system. Members were therefore able to rank the options in order of preference.

86. A clear majority preference emerged on the basis of first preferences: two-thirds of the Assembly members (21 of the 31 present) voted for an elected regional assembly on the model of the Scottish Parliament or the Welsh Assembly. The second preference, with four votes was the combination of an elected mayor and an elected assembly, as in London. The current system and the system proposed in the current devolution deal received only two and three votes respectively (see Figure 4.2).

**FIGURE 4.2:  
VOTING ON THE  
SCALE OF A  
REGIONAL TIER**



Note: Only first preferences are shown. Numbers are percentages of the 31 members present during the second weekend.

## THE POWERS OF A YORKSHIRE REGIONAL ASSEMBLY

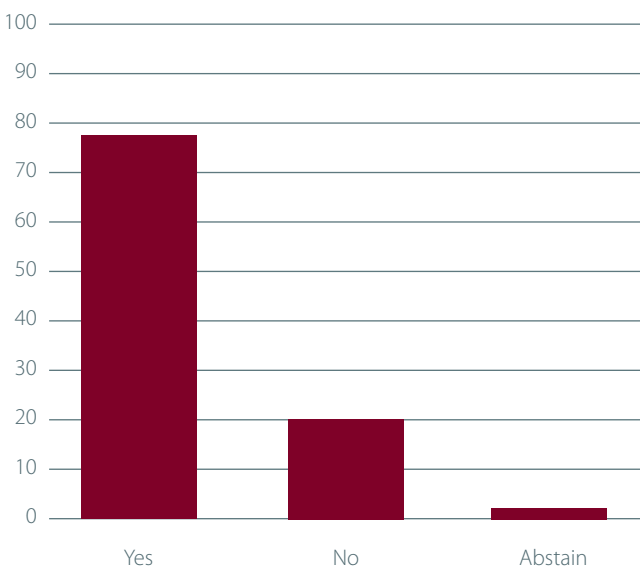
87. The Assembly then considered the appropriate powers for an elected Yorkshire Assembly. Two general questions were considered: whether such an Assembly should have law-making powers (that is, powers to make primary legislation, as in Scotland and Wales) or not (as in London); and whether it should have tax-raising powers (as, increasingly, in Scotland) or simply receive a block grant from central government (as in Wales and London).

88. The results of these votes are shown in Figure 4.3. A substantial majority of members favoured tax-raising powers. There was not

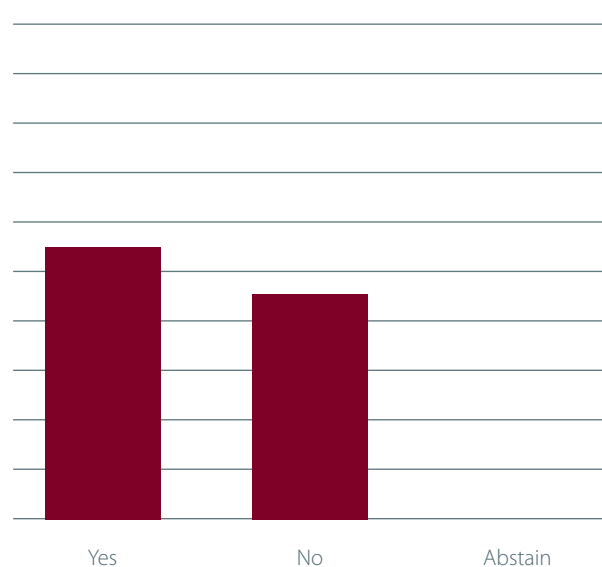
time to examine the complex question of what taxes should be devolved or how far the Assembly should be self-financing, and it was clear that initial opinions on these matters varied among Assembly members. A majority, but a much narrower one (17 votes to 14) favoured law-making powers. Some members expressed concerns that giving too much power to the regional assembly could create either a 'race to the bottom' or a 'postcode lottery'. The general mood was nevertheless clearly for significant devolution beyond what is currently on offer.

**FIGURE 4.3: VOTING ON THE SCALE OF A REGIONAL TIER**

**Should the Yorkshire Assembly have tax-raising powers?**



**Should the Yorkshire Assembly have law-making powers?**

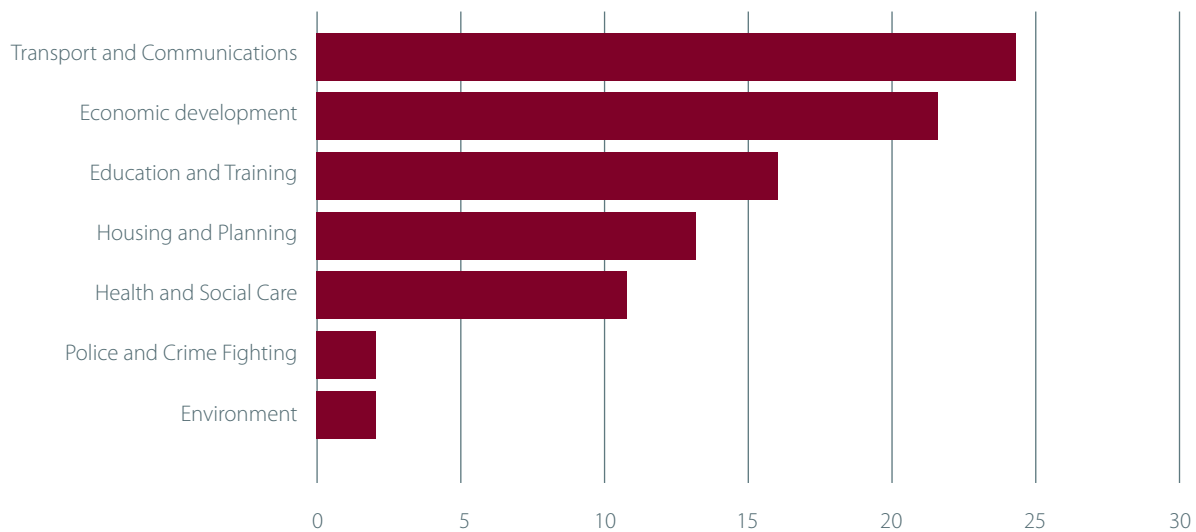


Note: Numbers are percentages of the 31 members present during the second weekend.

89. Assembly North also considered the sorts of issues that it would particularly want an elected Yorkshire Assembly to deal with. Small-group discussions yielded a range of policy areas that at least some Assembly members thought would be particularly important, and were followed by an indicative vote which allowed members to indicate which three of these would be their highest priorities. The results are shown in Figure 4.4. They show that most members attached priority to the areas of transport and communications, economic development, and education and training.

90. There was also discussion that some but not all powers should be devolved in each of the policy areas. An example is the area of education. There was discussion of the differences between pre- and post-16 education and between academic and vocational education. There was most interest in devolution of real powers in relation to post-16/vocational education and training. But there was also some interest in devolution of powers over academy and free schools.

**FIGURE 4.4: VOTING ON POLICY PRIORITIES**



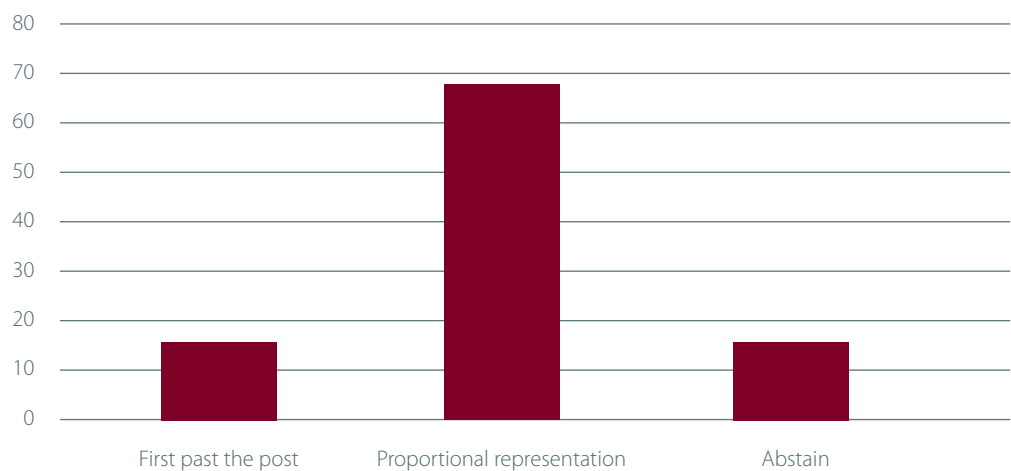
Note: Assembly members were able to vote for up to three priority areas. The numbers shown are raw vote numbers for each of the options.

## FURTHER ASPECTS OF DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE

91. Many further aspects of local democracy and governance were discussed and voted on during the Assembly's meetings on the final day. One question was the core issue of the electoral system for the Yorkshire Assembly. As Figure 4.5 shows, members voted

overwhelmingly for the principle of proportional representation rather than a first past the post system such as is used for elections to the House of Commons.

**FIGURE 4.5: VOTING ON THE SCALE OF A REGIONAL TIER**



Note: Numbers are percentages of the 31 members present during the second weekend.

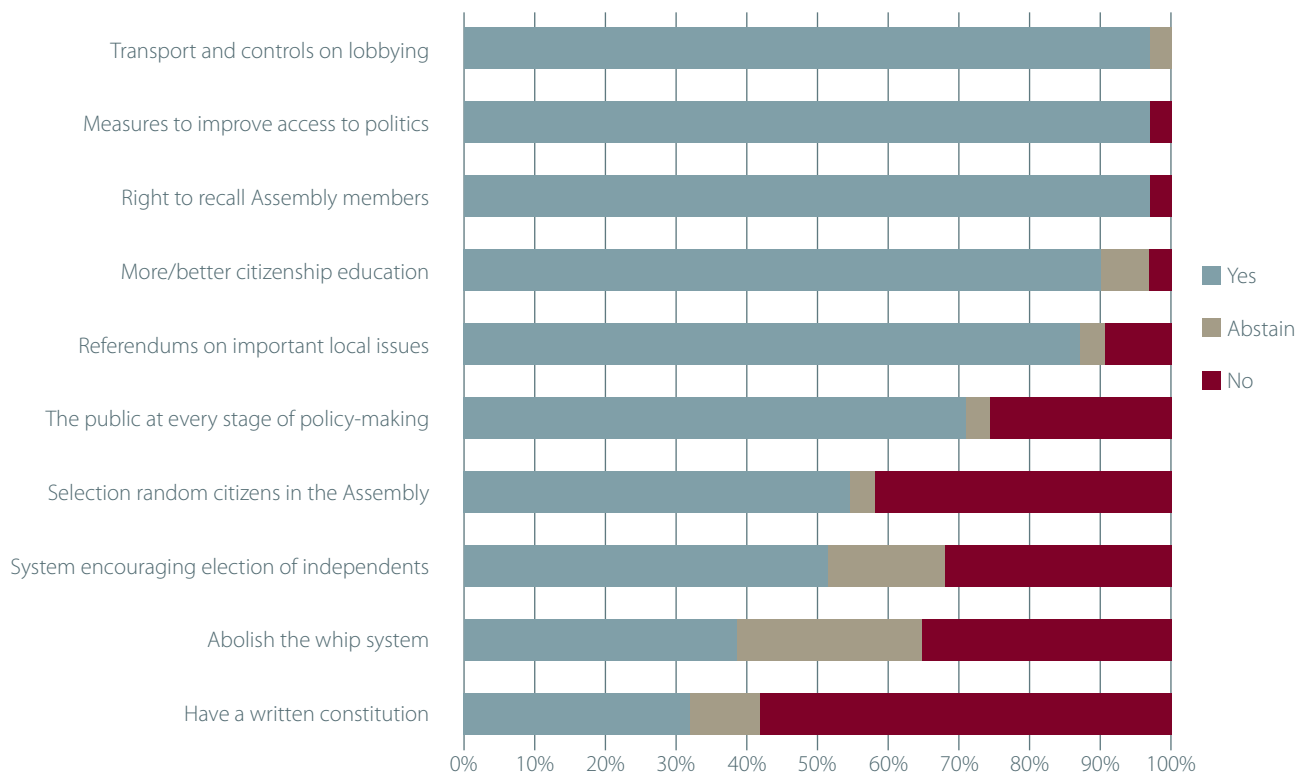
92. A series of Yes/No votes were then held on a range of further issues (see Figure 4.6 below):

- a) Five proposals were backed by overwhelming majorities of Assembly members: proposals to ensure transparency and to control lobbying in local and regional government; to improve public access to politics, particularly among younger citizens, through measures such as electronic voting and improved online information; to allow citizens to recall members of the Yorkshire Assembly ahead of scheduled elections; to improve citizenship education in schools; and to hold referendums on important local issues.
- b) Another three proposals were supported by smaller majorities: to ensure direct public participation in decision-making at every stage of the policy process; to include randomly selected members of the public among the members of the Yorkshire Assembly; and to introduce an electoral system for the Yorkshire Assembly that would encourage the election of independents rather than just party representatives.

c) Two further proposals did not receive majority backing. A proposal to abolish party whipping was supported by more members than opposed it (12 votes to 11). But a significant number of members (eight) abstained, perhaps reflecting the fact that there had been limited time to discuss the idea. A proposal for a written constitution was also rejected, though, again the topic was not discussed in depth.

93. Assembly North discussions revealed important nuances in relation to some of these points. Notably, in relation to random selection of citizens into the Yorkshire Assembly, members acknowledged that this would need to be done carefully. There was general agreement that citizens selected in this way would need to be paid in some way. One idea was that people could indicate when registering to vote whether they would be available for such office to participate on an assembly. Another was that such participation might be limited to serving on particular committees rather than being long-term members of the whole assembly.

**FIGURE 4.6: VOTING ON FURTHER ASPECTS OF DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE**



94. Cutting across a number of these points, it was emphasized that random selection, referendums, hyper-localism and other mechanisms allowing citizens to engage more would work only accompanied by measures such as improved citizenship education and improved use of the internet to engage groups such as young people. Votes were also held on three possible structures for local government below the level of the Yorkshire Assembly. There was considerable interest among members in strengthening the powers of local communities below the level of the four current local authorities in South Yorkshire. Three options were discussed:

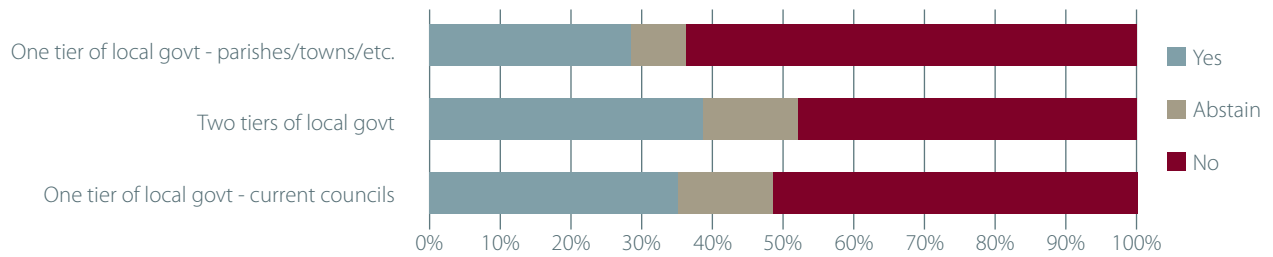
- a) that a one-tier structure of local government should be retained, based on the four existing local authorities;

b) that a two-tier structure should be established, including both the current local councils and a lower tier of parish, town, or community councils;

c) that the existing local authorities should be abolished and a one-tier structure of local government introduced at the level of parishes, towns, or communities; the existing councils' powers would then be transferred either down to this tier or up to the Yorkshire Assembly.

Figure 4.7 shows the voting on these options. None received majority support. In order to reach a clear view, more discussion time would have been needed, followed by a ballot using the alternative vote. Such time was not, however, available.

**FIGURE 4.7: VOTING ON STRUCTURES OF LOCAL GOVERNANCE**

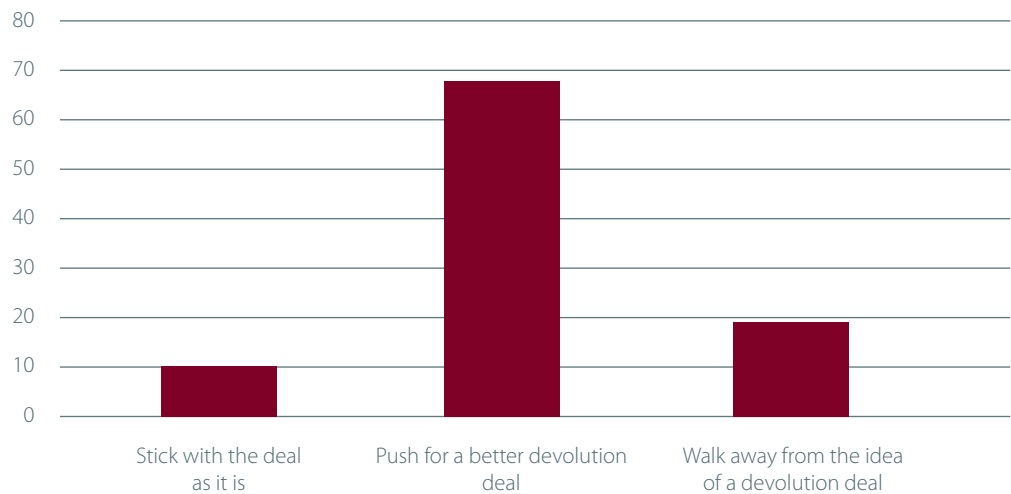


95. Finally, Assembly North considered its response to the devolution deal that is on the table for the proposed Sheffield City Region. Two votes were held on this. The first vote asked whether members thought that council leaders in South Yorkshire should accept the deal in its current form, try to push for a better deal, or walk away from the idea of a devolution deal. As Figure 4.8 shows, a substantial majority voted to push for a better deal. There was only limited time to discuss the elements that an improved deal should contain. But there were clear concerns about the proposed elected mayor: many members felt the accountability of a mayor would be limited, that a bad mayor could do much damage, and that there could be gridlock if the mayor and local councillors disagreed strongly. There was also concern that the mayoral model was apparently being imposed from outside, even though part of the proposed city region (Sheffield City itself) had previously voted

against a proposal for a (different) mayoral system in a referendum in 2012. Some members also wanted to see greater powers in areas such as health and social care and the environment, though there was insufficient time to gauge the overall balance of opinion.

96. This vote reflected a nuanced view among Assembly members: while their ideal was for a much more ambitious programme of devolution to Yorkshire as a whole, they also recognised that this option is not currently on the government's agenda and that, in the shorter term, it would be desirable for policy-makers to continue their engagement with the current devolution process. While some witnesses had argued that the region should not allow itself to be pushed into accepting a weak devolution settlement by central government, several others had highlighted the additional funding and powers could be lost if the region walked away from the current offer.

**FIGURE 4.8: VOTING ON HOW LOCAL COUNCILS SHOULD REACT TO THE DEVOLUTION DEAL**

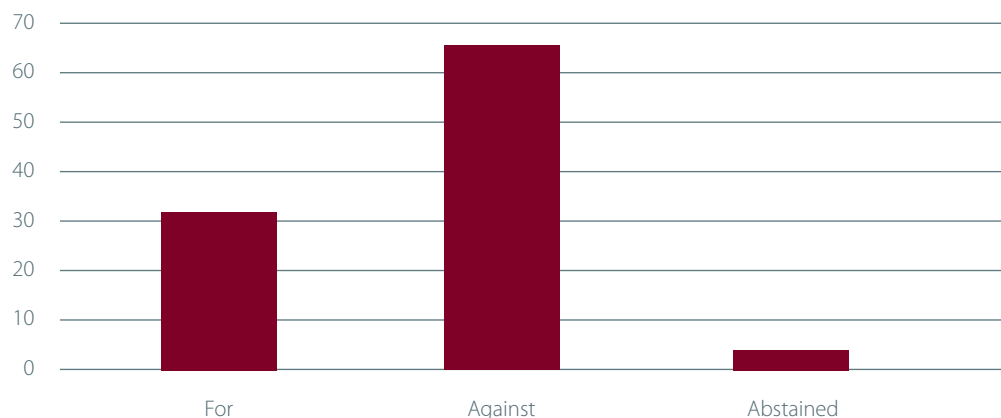


Note: Numbers are percentages of the 31 members present during the second weekend.

97. The second vote asked the question 'If a referendum were held tomorrow on the Sheffield Devolution Deal as currently proposed and the local councils said this is the best they can get, would you vote for it or against it?' The results for this vote are shown in Figure 4.9. As is apparent, in November 2015, a substantial majority of Assembly members would have voted against the proposed deal.



FIGURE 4.9:  
VOTING ON  
THE CURRENT  
DEVOLUTION DEAL



Note: Numbers are percentages of the 31 members present during the second weekend.

### BOX 4.1: Summary of Assembly North's Decisions

1. The majority of the members of Assembly North advocated a directly elected assembly for Yorkshire with substantial powers, including some tax-raising and law-making powers.
2. Members also supported a range of measures designed to enhance public participation in local and regional decision-making.
3. The majority of members did not support the proposed devolution deal in its current form.
4. Nevertheless, the majority also concluded that, given the options currently on the political agenda, local councils should remain engaged with current devolution discussions and should seek a deal promoting stronger democracy and perhaps encompassing enhanced powers.

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# Chapter Five: Assembly South - *Discussions and Conclusions*

Read this chapter if you are interested in:

- Whether Assembly South came to a similar set of viewpoints as Assembly North.
- How issues of geographical scale and governance frameworks were settled.
- If having elected politicians on the assembly seemed to affect the style or quality of deliberation.
- Innovations in the running or delivery of citizens' assemblies.

## 5.1 Assembly South

98. Assembly South focused on the question of how Hampshire and the Isle of Wight should be governed. In the second weekend, the Assembly considered its preferred characteristics of any new devolved body that might be created above the level of current local authorities. Discussions were structured around three broad areas:
- a) Priorities: If a devolved body is to be created, what should its priorities be?
  - b) Scale: If a devolved body is to be created, what area should it cover?
  - c) Structures: If a devolved body is to be created, how should decision-making be organised?

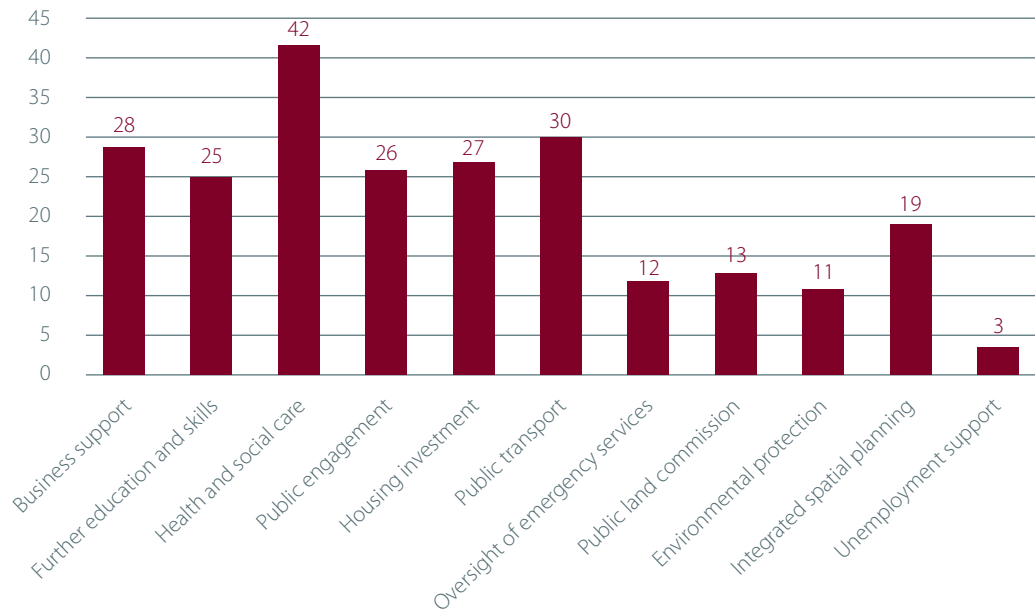
99. The small group discussions generated options for each of these issues that were then voted on at the beginning of the final day of the Assembly. In addition, members took part in an 'Open Space'. This allowed them to suggest issues that they felt had not been discussed in enough depth in the Assembly. Small table discussions generated topics and there were two rounds of discussions led by specific members who had suggested the issue. Other members could move to any discussion that was of interest. Each open space discussion generated a proposition that was then voted on by the Assembly as a whole to ensure that there was broad support. Finally, assembly members were also asked to consider whether they would support the *Hampshire and Isle of Wight Prospectus: the devolution proposals submitted to the Government by the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Partnership (HIOW Prospectus)* if a referendum were held tomorrow on the proposal.

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### PRIORITIES FOR A DEVOLVED BODY

100. Assembly members generated a list of potential priorities from the powers of existing devolution deals and devolved nations in the UK. The top five priorities generated by each table were then collated into a ballot. Participants were given 10 votes to allocate to any of the priorities (i.e. it was possible to concentrate or spread votes). Figure 5.1 (below) shows the spread of votes.
101. The top priority is clearly 'Health and social care: integration to ensure responsiveness to local needs'. It is notable that this is *not* part of the *HIOW Prospectus*. Across the English devolution deals, only Greater Manchester has come to an agreement with central government to devolve responsibilities in this area of policy.
102. Five other policy areas were closely bunched in terms of preference (in order of priority):
- a) Public transport (providing the framework for more effective, accessible and integrated public transport).
  - b) Business support.
  - c) Housing investment (investment in housing that responds to local needs).
  - d) Public engagement (to ensure shared decision-making and transparency).
  - e) Further education and training.

**FIGURE 5.1:  
VOTING ON  
PRIORITIES FOR A  
DEVOLVED BODY**

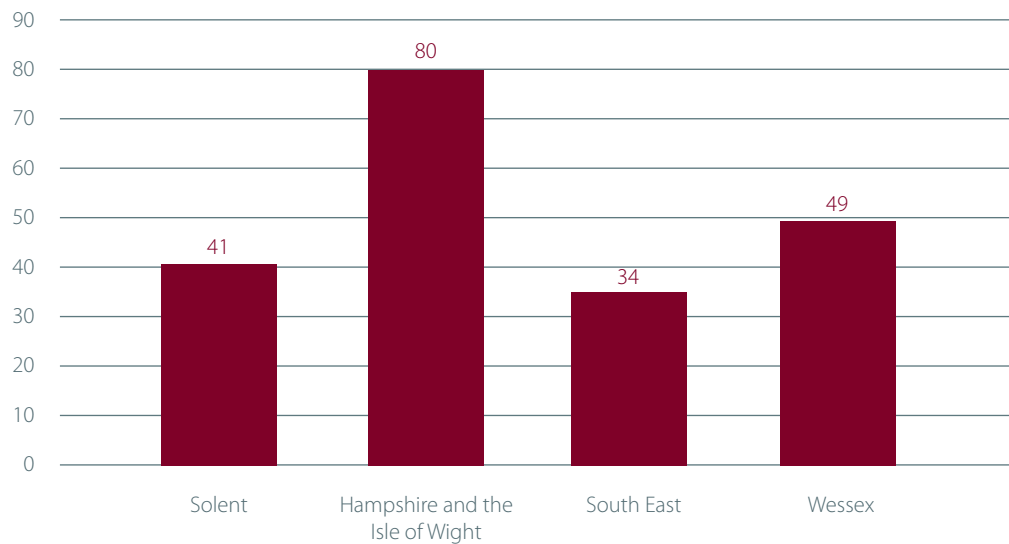


## THE SCALE OF A DEVOLVED BODY

103. Assembly members selected four geographical areas from their small group discussions to put to a vote. Preferential voting was used, with members ranking the possible options between 1 and 4. First

votes were weighted as four, through to the fourth vote weighted as one (known as a standard Borda Count). The results of the vote are in Figure 5.2.

**FIGURE 5.2:  
VOTING ON  
GEOGRAPHICAL  
SCALE OF  
DEVOLVED BODY**



104. The obvious favoured option on geographical scope is Hampshire and the Isle of Wight: the area covered by Hampshire County Council and the three unitary authorities of Isle of Wight,

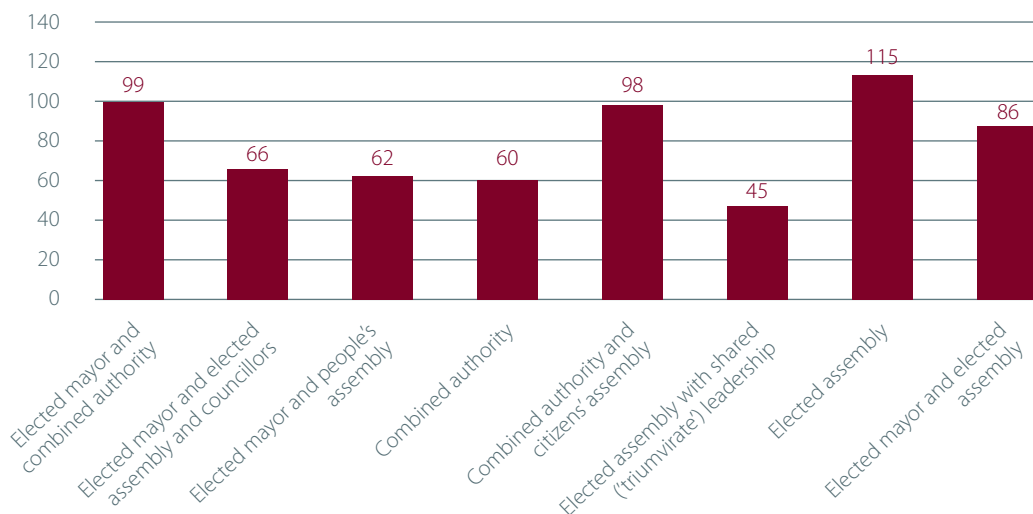
Portsmouth and Southampton. This is a clear endorsement of the geographical area promoted by the *HIOW Prospectus*.

## DECISION MAKING STRUCTURES OF A DEVOLVED BODY

105. The small group discussions on decision-making structures generated 8 different governance structures, indicating the extent to which Assembly members were creative in thinking about issues such as democratic accountability. A preferential

vote was used, ranking the possible options (identified by the groups) between 1 and 8. The results in Figure 5.3 are generated by weighting the first preference as eight points through to eighth preference (where chosen) as one point (standard Borda Count).

**FIGURE 5.3:  
VOTING ON DECISION  
MAKING STRUCTURE  
OF DEVOLVED BODY**



106. The favoured governing structure is a directly elected assembly ('An assembly made up of representatives elected by the public – the assembly then selects its leader'). This arrangement is not on the Government's agenda currently. The second choice is the Government's preference that it is requiring in most devolution deals: elected mayor and combined authority ('Mayor directly elected by the public; and a body made up of leaders of local councils'). An innovative design is third by only one point:

combined authority and citizens' assembly ('A body made up of leaders of local councils; and an assembly of randomly selected citizens').

107. The results are sensitive to the form of voting system used. If only first preferences are taken (first past the post), then the combined authority and citizens' assembly option is the most popular (by one vote). Under an alternative Borda Count, the second and third options are reversed.

## FURTHER REFLECTIONS ON LOCAL GOVERNANCE: RESULTS OF THE OPEN SPACE

108. The following propositions were generated by Assembly members through the Open Space discussions. All received assent from the Assembly and are presented in order of popularity. Many are contrary to current Government policy. [Figures for 'agree'/'disagree' are in brackets – 'neither agree nor disagree' and 'don't know' are not included]:

- There needs to be greater capacity for collaboration and effective partnerships between public agencies (24/0);
- Local government needs to support and resource the use of all possible channels to motivate public participation (23/1);
- In public consultations, it is important to take care to be clear about the meaning of terms and purposes that are to be discussed (22/0);
- Central government should set a minimum level of standards for service delivery, leaving room for local autonomy (22/1);
- If there is an elected mayor, there should be a system of recall (21/2);
- High levels of public participation promote good quality decision-making in local government (20/1);
- There needs to be greater equality and consistency in the devolution of powers (20/1);

- Local councils should be elected under some form of proportional representation (18/4);
- If there is an elected mayor, they should take on the responsibilities of the Police and Crime Commissioner (17/3);
- Costs should not exceed the costs of running services under existing arrangements (17/6);
- We need a system of local government where more independents stand for local office, reducing the power of political parties (16/5);
- If there is an elected mayor, they should be elected by transferable vote (14/3);
- The focus of devolution on organisations means that we are not starting from the perspective of people and their different needs and wishes (10/0);
- Any new body that is created should be able to challenge austerity, including the capacity to raise local business rates (10/2);
- If there is a new devolved authority, Hampshire County Council should be abolished (10/5).

## ASSEMBLY SOUTH: KEY INSIGHTS

109. Overall, Assembly South members were evenly split in their support for the proposal that is currently under consideration by central government: *Devolution for the People of Hampshire and*

*the Isle of Wight: A Prospectus for Discussion*. Underneath the 50:50 split, however, a number of more subtle, but no less important, research findings can also be highlighted.

110. The first and most important lesson is that the participants in Assembly South were willing and able to deal with highly complex contemporary governance issues. By their own assessment, all members agreed that they had 'learned a lot' during the process, while many went out of their way to write strongly complimentary statements in the final survey at the end of the final day. The Democracy Matters team was deeply impressed by the extent of members' commitment and the quality of their engagement during the weekends.
111. Second, one of the rationales for including councillors as members of Assembly South was to understand how their participation affects the deliberations of a citizens' assembly. In the survey of participants at the end of each weekend, we asked members whether one or more people in their small group had tended to dominate the discussion so that others found it difficult to contribute. At the end of the first weekend a third of members stated that such domination was present in their small group discussions, a figure far higher than Assembly North where there were no councillors present. Observation of the groups (discussed further below) suggests that citizens often deferred to the councillor on their table when faced with challenging questions on local governance. At the end of the second weekend, however, the perception of domination amongst members had dropped significantly. There are a number of explanations for this change: the small groups were reshuffled and rebalanced in the second weekend; facilitators were more experienced in ensuring fairness in participation; and participants had grown in confidence and knowledge by the second weekend and were less likely to allow others to dominate.
112. Third, the importance of considering *how* witnesses provide evidence to Assembly members became clear across the two weekends. One of the advantages of citizens' assemblies is that members hear from witnesses with a range of different opinions. In the first weekend, a traditional witness format was used: witnesses presented their case for five minutes; participants worked in groups to generate questions; selected questions are then answered in a plenary session. This relatively formal format is controlled by the Chair, with most participants simply observers and relatively few questions can be answered. The second weekend experimented with 'Witness Speed Dating'. This worked in a very different way and changed the power dynamics noticeably. Again, witnesses presented their case in five minutes; and participants generated questions in small groups. But then the witnesses circulated round each table with eight minutes at each one. Members knew that they only had witnesses with them for a short time and so demanded succinct answers. And they were able to follow up if those answers were not acceptable. Members embraced the opportunity to question witnesses directly, while the extent to which participants felt empowered after this exercise was noticeable and the activity received highly positive comments.
113. Fourth, the Open Space organised on the final day also proved a positive innovation. Although the agenda for the Assembly was open for discussion, it was primarily driven by the interests of the research team. Having focused on the *HLOW Prospectus* and the potential characteristics of any new devolved body, members were given space to discuss issues that they felt had not been given enough time in the Assembly. Members who suggested topics then led the discussions with other members also interested in that particular issue. Some groups were large, others only contained two members, but it gave space for these conversations to take place. Each group produced a proposition that was then voted on by the whole Assembly to gauge whether there was broad support for the statement. Again, there was positive feedback on this activity.
114. Finally, Assembly South highlighted important issues around the future sustainability of citizens' assemblies at local government level. Although more effective from a democratic perspective than many other consultation mechanisms, they remain expensive. Quality deliberation takes considerable time. Members deserve to be treated well during that time, requiring good hotels, meeting facilities, food, and refreshments, all of which come at a cost. The success of Assembly South depended on a large team of student facilitators and helpers who gave their time freely, but who would not be available on a regular basis. Involvement in a citizens' assembly is also time-consuming for its members and there were retention challenges in Assembly South (although most related to illness). These challenges highlight the need for careful consideration of timing and choice of topics for future assemblies, as well as consideration of scale and resources. However, the success of the Democracy Matters citizens' assembly pilots demonstrates that the conditions for future sustainability at the local level are worthy of further examination.

## BOX 5.1: Key Lessons

1. A balanced split of opinion on the current devolution deal, with similar points of contestation to Assembly North—geographic scale, powers and governance arrangements.
2. Assembly South clearly supported the geographical boundaries that are currently being considered for a 'devo deal'.
3. However, opinion was divided on the most effective governance framework with a slight preference for an elected regional assembly (as with Assembly North) or some standing form of citizens assembly.
4. The evidence clearly suggests that assembly members were able to understand the complexity of devolution as an issue.
5. Moreover, as the assembly progressed through the stages so the confidence of all participants appeared to grow and the dominance of specific members waned following the intervention and support of staff.

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# Chapter Six: Assessing the Assemblies

Read this part if you are interested in:

- Understanding the detailed findings from the data
- The quality of deliberation and evidence of change as the assemblies progressed
- Insights regarding domination, respect, listening and truthfulness
- Exploring the role of facilitators and support staff and how knowledge and understanding of the issues increased.
- The link between the organisation and facilitation of the assembly, on the one hand, and the quality of deliberation and outputs, on the other.

115. We turn now to the first of our core research objectives as set out in Chapter 1: an analysis of what the UK citizens' assembly pilots tell us about how well citizens' assemblies may work, particularly in the UK. We consider the evidence for the first four key research questions: on the **representativeness** of citizens' assemblies, the **quality** of the discussions, the **effects** of participation on assembly members, and the effect of assemblies on **wider discourse** around the issues that the assemblies consider.

116. As we also noted in Chapter 1, the evidence that we draw on is multifaceted. Some draws on the surveys of assembly members that we conducted at the start and end of each weekend. Other elements are based on our own reflections and the qualitative feedback we have received from assembly members and others who have engaged with the assemblies. We use all such sources, as appropriate, through the course of this chapter. In future publications, we plan to draw also on analysis of the transcripts of assembly discussions. That analysis is not, however, available at present.

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## 6.1 Representativeness of Assembly Members

117. The first key criterion for a citizens' assembly is that its membership should be representative of the wider population. Advocates of citizens' assemblies argue that they can achieve a higher degree of representativeness than other types of political forum. Representatives within elected institutions such as parliaments and councils are very unusual people: most are members of political parties, at a time when party members in the UK make up less than two per cent of the electorate;<sup>6</sup> and all are people who are prepared to put themselves forward for a public election, which even most party members show no willingness to do. Most voters feel very alienated from these representatives, often viewing them as a separate 'political class'. The people who choose to attend traditional consultation events, meanwhile, are also often very unrepresentative. By contrast, advocates of citizens' assemblies argue that they contain a broader cross-section of the community: the proportion of the population willing to respond positively to an invitation addressed specifically to them to participate in an assembly is higher than the proportion willing

either to seek election or to attend a town hall meeting. Clearly, participation in citizens' assemblies remains a minority pursuit, but it does better than the currently prevailing alternatives. Stratification can also be used to ensure that the final membership is representative in terms of criteria such as gender and age.

118. On the other hand, critics question these claims to representativeness. They point out that, while elected representatives may be unusual people, they are elected by and responsible to their communities, and they have an awareness of the concerns and interests of people living in those communities, in a way that randomly selected citizens may not.

119. Full evaluation of these arguments about representativeness thus requires that we look at two things: first, the characteristics of the membership of the pilot citizens' assemblies in comparison with the local populations; and, second, the engagement of assembly members with a diverse range of perspectives and experiences from beyond as well as within their own circle.

<sup>6</sup> Richard Keen, Membership of UK Political Parties, House of Commons Library briefing paper, no. SN05125, 11 August 2015.

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## THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ASSEMBLY MEMBERS

120. We have presented detailed evidence of the socio-demographic characteristics of the citizens selected for the assemblies in Chapter 2. We did not achieve the degree of representativeness that we would have hoped for in terms of gender, age, ethnicity and political interest but in relation to political affiliation representation was fairly diverse. The challenge of representative recruitment is therefore a core research finding of this project in the sense that even a five-stage process involving a specialist polling firm and members of the research team struggled to ensure a full complement of assembly members. Targeted recruitment of specific representatives for 'hard to reach' sections of society is therefore likely to be necessary for a more representative sample. Over-recruitment could also be used in order to offset the risk of 'no shows' but this involves its own risks in the sense that an assembly might actually end up with too many members if everyone does 'show up'. However, opportunities for these kind of 'top up' mechanisms were not possible within the time and financial restraints of this pilot project.

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## REPRESENTING THE BROADER COMMUNITY

121. Turning to assembly members' engagement with a diverse range of perspectives and experiences, including those from beyond the assembly itself, past citizens' assemblies in Canada and the Netherlands were able to engage in substantial outreach activities. In British Columbia, for example, fifty public hearings were held across the province during the assembly's consultation phase, and between four and sixteen assembly members attended each of these. According to the assembly's final report, 'approximately 3,000 British Columbians attended presentations given by 383 people. Following the formal presentations, the hearings were opened to all attendees for comments and suggestions, and for discussions with Assembly members.'<sup>7</sup> The assembly also received 1,603 written submissions.
122. Opportunities for such structured public engagement were more limited in the UK citizens' assembly pilots: time was shorter; these were also unofficial assemblies and could not therefore expect the same public traction. Nevertheless, many members reported that they did discuss the assembly business with the people around them in their families, workplaces, and communities. We discuss this below, in section 6.3.
123. The main lesson for representativeness from our pilots is the critical importance of the recruitment process. Previous assemblies have spent significant resources on ensuring a diverse sample of participants. We did not have the luxury of the resources available to these earlier projects and were working on a much tighter timescale and a smaller pool of potential participants (the local YouGov online panel) Also, we were not able to offer honorariums to participants to further motivate participation.

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## 6.2 Quality of Discussions

124. Our second criterion for assessing the assemblies relates to the quality of the discussions within Assembly North and Assembly South. As we noted in Chapter 1, advocates of citizens' assemblies argue two things. First, they contend that ordinary members of the public, if given proper time and support, can engage effectively even with very complex policy choices: they build up knowledge and understanding to make choices that are coherent and that can reasonably be expected to advance their goals. Second, they argue that citizens' assemblies are in some ways better than traditional elected assemblies in debating issues. Traditional parliaments and councils tend to be riven by party divides: members often adhere to their party line and dismiss the views of their opponents, no matter what the strengths and weaknesses of the arguments might be. Citizens' assembly members, by contrast, are not bound by party affiliations and are not seeking re-election or promotion. They can therefore participate in more honest, open-ended discussion.
125. Critics, meanwhile, worry that some issues do require expert judgement. Changes to any one part of the constitutional architecture are likely to have knock-on effects on other parts. Such effects may appear abstruse to the lay critic but nevertheless be fundamental. To evaluate these arguments, we begin by looking at evidence on 'deliberativeness': the degree to which assembly members did in fact discuss freely and equally with each other, listening to and respecting each other's arguments and feeling free to express their own views. Then we turn to the degree of knowledge and understanding manifested by the members, both in their discussions and in their final decisions.

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## QUALITY OF DELIBERATION

126. Overall the perceived quality of deliberation self-reported by participants was fairly high. This section considers in summary the perceptions of the participants of the following aspects of the small group discussions:
- a) Representativeness and diversity of the assembly in terms of people and ideas
  - b) Respectful discussion
  - c) Quality of listening
  - d) Level of justification of members' views
  - e) Truthfulness of the views expressed
  - f) Difficulty of the discussion and understanding
  - g) The neutrality and efficacy of the small group facilitator in ensuring everybody had a chance to speak
  - h) Opinion change and opinion clarification
  - i) Domination and influence.

<sup>7</sup> British Columbia Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform, *Making Every Vote Count: The Case for Electoral Reform in British Columbia: Final Report, December 2004*, p. 12.

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## REPRESENTATIVENESS OF IDEAS AND MINORITIES

127. As we know from the demographic analysis of participants the assembly was predominantly white and composed of older participants. Both assemblies detected this problem (around 50% of participants disagree that those mostly affected by the issue were represented in the assembly and that the assembly was diverse enough to consider all perspectives), and in the North the participants requested a specific inquiry to understand why it had been difficult to engage minorities. As seen from our demographic analysis it is simply impossible to statistically represent the smallest minorities in assemblies of 32 and 23

people respectively. However, the overwhelming majority of participants (approximately 90%) in both assemblies agreed that they were exposed to a broad range of diverse opinions and by combining such result with the fact that the members of the assembly were fairly representative in terms of political affiliation, we can conclude that for small assemblies in which it is impossible to represent statistically minorities, it is possible to represent different political points of view and at least offer a spectrum of competing ideas.

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## RESPECT

128. The indicators of respect are all slightly stronger in Assembly North in which the politicians were not present. For example, in the first weekend 92% of Assembly South participants agree that they had ample opportunities to express their views compared to 100% in the North. A similar pattern can be observed with regard to self-reported perceptions of respectful interactions in the small group discussions. While in the first weekend 100% of the members of Assembly North agree that fellow participants respected what they had to say even when they did not agree with them, in the South the percentage is 97%. In both cases these differences practically disappear during the second weekend. Assembly South shows a general improvement in both indicators, while Assembly North shows a small deterioration that is not statistically significant.

129. Participant observations by note-takers and observers, combined with the feedback from facilitators highlighted significant problems and tensions in a number of discussion groups in the first weekend of Assembly South. Interestingly during the early discussion of assembly values at the start of the process, one group in the South argued that this was an unnecessary and patronising exercise. This group ended up having the lowest

score for respect across both assemblies.

130. The experience of the UK pilot shows that self-reported indicators of quality of deliberation are difficult to understand without a comparable benchmark and without additional metrics that can be used to triangulate the meaning of scores. If we did not have the comparison with Assembly North and if we did not have the feedback from facilitators, the 97% score for Assembly South on the respect indicator would have signalled a success. Instead according to almost all note-takers and facilitators, the quality of discussion was low with not much respect. Only by comparing the North and the South and taking a deeper look at the more fine grain scale of the indicator does this difference emerge from the survey data. In the North, 75% of participants 'strongly agree' that they had ample opportunity to express their views and that their fellow participants respected what they had to say, even when they did not agree with them. In the South, by comparison, only 35% of participants strongly agreed that they had such opportunities and 52% of strongly agree that their fellow participants were respectful. Similar differences can be seen in the second weekend.

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## LISTENING

131. The indicator for listening is slightly better in Assembly North in which the politicians were not present. During the first weekend 96% of participants in Assembly North agree that they felt that the other small group members listened carefully to what they had to say, compared to 87% in the South. Our indicator detects a decline in listening quality during the second weekend both in the South (80%) and the North (93%). This evolution is not statistically significant and further research with a larger sample of participants would be necessary to understand the cause. It is interesting that it occurred in both assemblies. It

potentially points in the direction of a fatigue effect, the effect of forthcoming votes, or the fact that participants improve their deliberation capacity over time and expect more attentive listening from their fellow participants. During the first weekend almost none of our participants had experience of a structured deliberative event, hence they did not have a benchmark to evaluate what good and bad group discussion looks like. By the end of the second weekend the participants had more than 24 hours of structured deliberation experience under their belt.

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## JUSTIFICATION

132. One important aspect of the quality of deliberation is the justification, rational or anecdotal, of views that are exchanged during the discussions. Similar to the previous indicators, we observe that in the first weekend Assembly South underperforms in comparison to the North, with only 35% of participants as against 50% in the North disagreeing that many people

expressed strong views without offering reasons. We observe a statistically significant improvement in the South between the first and the second weekend that implies, given the small sample, a massive improvement in perception with 57% of participants disagreeing that justification was absent, while the North shows a non-significant deterioration (48%).



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## TRUTHFULNESS

133. More than 80% of participants in both assemblies agree that participants were speaking what was truly on their mind. This is the only indicator in which the South has a slight better performance in the first weekend than the North (86% against

84%). The North shows a positive change between the two weekends (from 84% to 93%), while the South shows some deterioration (from 86% to 81%).

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## DIFFICULTY AND AVAILABILITY OF INFORMATION

134. More than 90% of participants in both assemblies in both weekends agree that they understood almost everything that their group members had to say. More than 80% of participants

in both weekends agree that they had enough information to participate effectively.

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## FEEDBACK ABOUT THE NEUTRALITY AND EFFICACY OF THE FACILITATOR IN ENSURING EVERYBODY HAD A CHANCE TO SPEAK

135. The feedback about facilitators shows that consistently facilitators were perceived as doing a good job in ensuring that everybody a chance to speak (around 90%). Again a similar pattern emerges: the first weekend in the South underperforms with 88% participants perceiving that the facilitator did a good job compared to 100% in the North. Once again Assembly South improved significantly in the second weekend, moving to 95%, while again Assembly North showed a slight decline to 93%.

136. As to the neutrality of facilitators, participants offer a more variegated set of answers. In the North during the first weekend 16% of the participants agree that the facilitator put forward their own ideas, compared to only 8% in the South. In the second weekend these differences almost disappear (3 and 5% respectively). Overall participant observation and observer feedback report a high level of satisfaction in all weekends apart from one group in the South in which the facilitator was

a foreign student and had to deal with a group that included strong anti-immigration perspectives and a vocal politician from UKIP. The facilitator was supported the second day by a senior member of the staff as co-facilitator. When procedures to promote equal and fair deliberation were introduced during the second day, the politician started to leave the room repeatedly after he had made his viewpoint known. Unfortunately, for reasons of privacy YouGov was unable to release data about participant demographics before the event, so we were not able to ensure distribution of political affiliations across the groups. In the second weekend the small groups in Assembly South were restructured, stratifying for party affiliation and by an indicator of participants' perceptions of their ability to influence the discussion. The general improvement in all indicators of the quality of discussion in Assembly South that we have observed across the two weekends is in part due to this design decision.

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## OPINION CHANGE AND OPINION CLARIFICATION

137. Deliberation is often perceived as a mechanism to clarify opinion and to promote reasoned opinion change. The first weekend of the Citizens Assembly was the learning weekend, while the second provided more space for deliberation. We observe a significant overall improvement in the indicator of opinion change. In the first weekend 51% of participants agree that they have changed opinion about devolution versus 73% in the second weekend. Again, the first weekend in Assembly South

underperforms in terms of opinion change (37%). An identical pattern emerges when looking at opinion clarification, with 69% participants agreeing that their opinion clarified during the first weekend and 90% during the second. These findings reinforce the idea that information provision alone does not drive (perceived) opinion change and clarification as much as the opportunity to deliberate.

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## DOMINATION AND INFLUENCE

138. The research team developed new indicators to capture two dynamics of deliberation where we may expect differences between an assembly that contains only citizens and one that includes politicians. We can hypothesise that politicians could affect deliberations in two ways. First, their political experience and confidence means that they may take on the role of influential participants, being particularly persuasive

during discussions. Second, they may play a more detrimental role, undermining the democratic character of discussions by dominating proceedings. Questions of domination and influence have not been asked explicitly in similar deliberative events. As such, we designed two indicators to capture the difference between domination and influence:

- a) One or more people in my small group tended to dominate the discussion so that others found it difficult to contribute.
  - b) One or more people in my small group were particularly influential in helping me to think through the issues we were discussing.
139. In both cases we asked respondents to name individuals who had an impact in these ways. We were aware that these questions may have a social desirability bias and participants may be reluctant to potentially criticise fellow participants by naming them. However, when we look at the domination question during the first weekend in the South, 31% of the participants agree that there was domination, while only 9% agree in the North. In the second weekend the difference between South and the North is reduced (with the perception of domination in the North increasing): 15% and 19% of participants agree that there is domination respectively. This improvement was corroborated by the feedback of note-takers, facilitators and observers in Assembly South that reported less domination in the second weekend.
140. When we look at the influence question, during the first weekend in the South 52% of the participants agree that there was a person that significantly influenced the group discussion, while only 22% in the North. In the second weekend the difference between South and the North is again reduced (24% in the South, 19% in the North).
141. When we look at the data about who the participants named in the South during the first weekend, we find that in terms of both domination and influence politicians tend to be nominated: out of 7 citizens who state there was domination, 4 nominate a politician (57%) and out of the 10 citizens who state there was influence on their thinking, 7 nominate a politician (70%). Recalling that there were only 6 politicians in Assembly South, their impact is certainly noticeable.
142. The reason for the drop in perceived domination and influence over time is not easy to disentangle. The rebalancing of the groups (on the basis of party affiliation and a proxy metric provided by the facilitators that attempted to identify how active participants were in the discussion) may have had a positive effect. It might be also due to the fact that citizens improved their sense of efficacy over time (and thus were less prone to influence and domination. Further, poor retention of politicians means that their effect is likely diminished (only 3 out of 6 returned for the second weekend).

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## THE IMPACT OF ORGANISATION AND FACILITATION

144. Finally in relation to the quality of discussion, we consider the impact of how the assemblies were organised. Our own observations and our discussions with the assembly members suggest three key points:
- a) Mixing discussion formats and activities was, as expected, important and effective. Some members felt uncomfortable speaking up before the whole assembly: indeed, a few chose never to do so (as was entirely within their rights). Giving them the space to speak within small groups was therefore important. Small-group discussions also allowed a depth that was harder to achieve during plenaries. In addition, switching between session types was often valuable in lifting energy levels. For example, in the final part of the first day of Assembly North, a highly interactive presentation style was introduced in order to re-energise the room after a difficult earlier session.
  - b) Good facilitation of the small-group discussions was indispensable. One of the most consistent themes in the feedback we received (both formally and informally) from assembly members was that the table facilitators did an excellent job. There were some difficult moments, particularly in the early stages of the assemblies, as members acquainted themselves with the assembly setting and the appropriate ways of expressing themselves within that context. It was essential that facilitators could handle such moments deftly, helping all members to recalibrate both their modes of listening and speaking.
  - c) Treating assembly members well also mattered. This was important in itself: they gave a huge amount of time and effort to this project and they deserved our respect and consideration in return. In addition, we expected good treatment to affect members' participation. Evidence on this is necessarily impressionistic. Nevertheless, members were often complimentary about the quality of the food and facilities. More specifically, the delivery of 'treats' – ice cream, crisps, cookies – at points when energy was likely to lag appeared to have the desired positive effect in lifting spirits, extending attention spans, and helping the discussions to remain focused.
145. There is also an important element that should not be underestimated. In order for citizens' assemblies to work the experience of this pilot project is that they have to be fun for everyone involved. This is not a flippant point but a critical element in explaining how such high standards of deliberation were achieved: people bought into the assembly experience because they were enjoying the challenge and having fun. This commitment to having fun was set out in Professor Flinders' introduction to Assembly North and also explains the commitment to innovation and flexibility that defined both assemblies. 'Making democracy fun' might sound like a cliché but it might actually have deeper implications for responding to some of the broader social challenges that formed the backdrop to this study.

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## CONCLUSIONS ON THE QUALITY OF DISCUSSION

146. The overall findings of the data on the quality of deliberation are striking. The evidence and data suggests that in a relatively short pilot study the research team was able to provide a broadly representative range of viewpoints and perspectives and on some occasions the assembly members actually demanded more information on specific points that they felt had not been covered in enough detail. Levels of respect and trust within and between assembly members was consistently high and levels of listening also appear to have been consistently impressive. Put slightly differently, it appears that the time invested in allowing

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the assemblies to decide upon their own rules, principles and working procedures was time well spent that paid dividends throughout the process in terms of ensuring mutual respect and inclusive discussions. The data also underlines that the quality of deliberation can to some extent be engineered through effective institutional design, trained facilitators and the provision of lots of accessible background information. But there is also something

more subtle at play in the sense that what became clear from the first morning of each assembly was that, in effect, what each assembly was trying to build was a high degree of social capital amongst members and with the research team. That is, high-trust, low-cost relationships that form a bond or common glue amongst everyone involved and through this allow issues to be raised and problems to be acknowledged and resolved.

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## 6.3 Effects on Assembly Members

147. Our third area of analysis concerns the effects of participation in the assembly on members: particularly effects on their attitudes towards and engagement with politics. Advocates of citizens' assemblies often argue that participation in such gatherings is likely to enhance members' attitudes towards and engagement with politics. Citizens are exposed to the difficult realities of political decision-making and may therefore appreciate better the challenges that politicians face, becoming less cynical or 'anti-political' in consequence. Members may also gain a sense that they have a legitimate voice and an ability to express themselves, which may strengthen their willingness to participate in politics.
148. On the other hand, critics are concerned that citizens' assemblies may in fact undermine traditional representative institutions. If a citizens' assembly is a good way of dealing with one issue, citizens might question why is it not a good way to deal with other political issues. Members might contrast the quality of their own discussions with that of the parliamentary debates that they

see on television and find their political representatives wanting. In other words, citizens' assemblies may increase the expectations of participants in ways that our representative institutions cannot fulfil. Here we discuss the effects of participation on the ordinary citizen members of our assembly pilots in relation to three issues: first, members attitudes towards politics and politicians; second, their sense of 'efficacy' – that is, their sense of their ability to participate effectively in politics; and, third their actual engagement with politics. Then we briefly also consider effects upon politician members.

149. During the citizens' assemblies we conducted surveys of participants at regular points during the deliberative process: at the start and end of each weekend. This enables an assessment of how the perceptions and attitudes of citizens evolved during the process. We are able to also compare the views of our participating citizens with the general population as we included some questions used in the British Election Study earlier in the year.

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## ATTITUDES TOWARDS POLITICS AND POLITICIANS

150. We asked participants about their attitudes towards politics and politicians – at both national and local levels. Firstly, we asked citizens whether they thought that our political system "would be improved if more powers were in the hands of local rather than national politicians". On this measure, agreement of participants increased over the whole process, though the largest increase was observed over the first weekend.
151. We also observed a gain in trust in Members of Parliament among

our participants during the process, though the increase is only slight. There was no corresponding increase in trust in the UK's democratic system, suggesting that the immediate impact of the assemblies on members' attitudes towards politics is complex. One explanation of the difference may be that both current and former national and local politicians were involved in the project (as expert witnesses, observers and, in Assembly South, as participants) and this direct contact may have had some effect on dispositions.

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## EFFICACY

152. There is stronger evidence of the impact of the assemblies on the perceived *efficacy* of respondents, in self-assessments of their ability to come to political judgements and to influence political decision making. These are crucial dimensions for evaluating how citizens' assemblies might empower and enable citizens. During the assemblies, we asked citizens whether they considered themselves "well enough informed to make recommendations on how [the Sheffield or Solent region] should be governed".

This measure saw a substantial gain across the two weekends, despite our participants already being politically engaged (as we noted previously). There was additionally a decline in the extent to which participants believed "People like me don't have any say in what the government does." Overall, the assemblies seem to have contributed to substantial gains in efficacy – even where results for attitude-change on politics and politicians was rather more mixed.

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## ENGAGEMENT WITH POLITICS

153. Evidence on members' engagement is also demonstrated in the qualitative evidence. We have already noted the high rates of retention among assembly members: Assembly North lost just one participant from the first weekend to the second, while Assembly South lost four (including one councillor). We understand that all of these absences were due to sickness. Engagement since the assemblies has remained strong. Just over 50 per cent of members from both assemblies attended the post-assembly event at Windsor Castle (and at least half a dozen were prevented from coming only by illness). The event concluded with requests from members to develop avenues for future involvement and advocacy for citizens' assemblies.
154. Participation in our closed Facebook groups was also very high: 77 per cent of Assembly North members and 52 per cent of Assembly South members joined their respective group; and 52 per cent and 30 per cent contributed to discussions. This involvement is well above the 20 per cent that is the standard engagement result for online communities, and solid activity continues at the time of preparing this report. Many members also reported that they were talking about politics among family and friends and engaging politically in their local communities in ways that they had not done before. Beyond this evidence from our surveys of assembly members, it is worthwhile also to consider what we can learn from the assemblies' recommendations. Members of both Assembly North and Assembly South suggested that they should consider options for the structure of local or regional political institutions that included randomly selected citizens. Assembly North voted by 17 votes to 13 in favour of including some randomly selected citizens among the members of a Yorkshire regional assembly, while the voting in Assembly South found that an arrangement including a citizens' assembly was the third most popular option for Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.
155. These conclusions affirm that assembly members saw citizens' assemblies as having a valuable role to play in political processes. On the other hand, neither assembly was close to suggesting that elected representatives are not also vital. In Assembly North, for example, there was discussion that, while including citizen members might be desirable, careful thought would need to be given to their numbers and to the role that they might play. The importance of having politicians who are accountable to voters was universally recognised and was a recurring theme in both assemblies.

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## THE IMPACT OF INCLUDING POLITICIANS ON ASSEMBLIES

156. One of the main research questions of this pilot project was to directly compare an assembly constituted only by citizens with one that included politicians. This models the difference between the assemblies that have taken place in Canada and the Netherlands with the recent mixed assembly in the Republic of Ireland. It is almost impossible to draw comparisons between these earlier assemblies as there is too much variation: in terms of timing, political context, structure and issues. Our project allows comparison across the two types of assemblies as they were held at the same time, on the same issue and had almost exactly the same structure (inclusion of politicians aside). There are some local differences between Sheffield and Southampton (for example, a devolution deal had been agreed between central government and local councils in Sheffield). However our analysis is an important first step towards better understanding the implications of including politicians as members of citizens' assemblies (and not just giving evidence).
157. The main concern amongst practitioners and academics about the inclusion of politicians is its effect on deliberation within the assembly. Because of their political experience, confidence and commitments, politicians may monopolize the discussion, exercise undue influence on the thinking of citizens and induce a partisan competitive frame in an environment that is designed to be non-partisan and cooperative. However others believe that the presence of politicians promotes greater impact of assemblies, will increase the satisfaction of participants that feel that their voice is being heard immediately and will reduce anti-politics sentiments.
158. The impressions of the citizens in Assembly South were fairly positive towards the presence of politicians. After the first weekend, around 55% of participants found the presence of politicians useful, with this percentage rising to 71% by the end of the second weekend. While 34% of participants believed that the presence of politicians promoted too much partisanship in the discussion in the first weekend, this goes down to 19% in the second weekend. When asked whether it would have been better not to have politicians as members of the assembly, 21% supported this position in the first weekend, rising to 29% in the second weekend. In interpreting our findings, we need to remember that the politicians who participated in Assembly South were local councillors, not national politicians. It is possible that the impact would have been different if more high profile politicians participated (as in the Irish convention).
159. Combining our results on attitudes from Assembly South with the earlier findings on the quality of deliberation and attitudes towards politics, we can make the following general statements about the impact of including local politicians in citizens' assemblies:
- At least in the short term, inclusion of politicians decreases the quality of deliberation (including the amount of perceived domination). It is an open question as to whether this early negative impact on deliberation has a longer-term effect: it may shape the agenda of the discussions and judgements that follow.
  - Attitudes towards politicians and political institutions are not affected. There are no significant differences between the results for Assembly North and South.
  - Internal and external efficacy is not affected. Again, there are no significant differences between the results for Assembly North and South.
  - While most participants in Assembly South found the presence of local politicians positive, a significant minority had a negative attitude towards their presence.

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## 6.4 CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

160. This was clearly a pilot project that was designed to offer an initial assessment of whether the public could play a positive role in complex constitutional policy-making through citizens' assemblies. The scale of this research and the tight timescales it

operated within prevent any sweeping generalisations or grand claims but such caveats should not mask some really important findings from this research (See Box 6.1).

### BOX 6.1: Key Findings

1. This project has offered critical insights into the challenges of delivering a representative cross section of society on a citizens' assembly. A larger assembly with more time and increased resources could have addressed this challenge.
2. The project was able to provide a representative cross-section in terms of policy-perspectives and debates.
3. The quality of deliberations seems to have been excellent with positive data across each of the variables. It is particularly notable how many people changed their minds during the course of the assemblies.
4. The 'assembly experience' seems to have had more of an impact on the personal beliefs of individuals in terms of political efficacy than it did in terms of increasing trust in politicians or democratic institutions.

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# Chapter Seven: Delivering the Assemblies

## Read this part if you are interested in:

- Designing a successful citizens' assembly.
- Want to estimate the likely costs of running an assembly.
- Why the quality of support to assembly members needs to be of such a high standard.
- Whether to pay people to serve on a citizens assembly.
- How many support staff you will need and the skills they will require.
- Why issues such as room layout, lighting, timing and even the clothes worn by the academic team can really matter.

161. The preceding chapters have set out a 'big picture' analysis of the UK citizens' assembly pilots. But those reflections tell us very little about the organisational challenges that citizens' assemblies

represent. In this chapter, we address a number of organisational points, which will be of particular value to anyone considering running a citizens' assembly in the future.

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## 7.1 Event Preparation

162. A large number of tasks had to be performed before the first meetings of the citizens' assemblies in October 2015. These included:

- a) recruitment of assembly members;
- b) booking of venues, including arrangements for meeting rooms, overnight accommodation, and food and refreshments;
- c) development of the programmes of the two assemblies;
- d) development of written and videoed briefing materials and the learning programme for the first weekend of each assembly;
- e) booking of speakers for the first assembly weekend;
- f) construction of a website for the two assemblies; and
- g) development of awareness of citizens' assemblies and of the pilot project among policy-makers, campaigners, and the media.
  - h) recruit and train volunteers
  - i) manage research, ethical and legal requirements
  - j) liaise between key personnel (such as chairs, facilitator, research team)
  - k) produce role specifications and protocols
  - l) produce logistic plans, backup and protocols

163. Preparatory meetings for the assemblies began in December 2014. Given uncertainties over timing and the political context, however, detailed planning could start only in July 2015, when the Project Director, Matthew Flinders, established a Management Team consisting of the chief investigators, co-researchers, research fellows and nexus officer. Much of the logistical work in preparing for the events was carried out by the two research fellows, who were in place only from August 2015. All of this meant that the time we had to set up the citizens' assembly pilots was very limited—a point to which we will return several times over the course of this chapter.

164. The Management Team was responsible for developing and delivering the citizens' assemblies. It also drew on its existing scholar networks and connections with organisers of previous citizens' assemblies to form an Advisory Group, which provided practical advice on matters such as recruitment, retention and the preparation of materials. Both the Management Team and Advisory Group were independent of government, but had important links to parliamentary, policy and local government resources. These external links were an important resource in decision-making and preparation for the assembly events.

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## RECRUITMENT OF MEMBERS

165. We discussed most aspects of member recruitment in Chapter 2. Here we offer further details of the logistics of that process. As we indicated in Chapter 2, our limited financial resources

placed considerable constraints on the recruitment process that we could employ: one of the quotations that we received for recruitment would have absorbed approaching 80 per cent of our

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entire budget (partly because it included financial incentives for participants), which would clearly have rendered the whole project unsustainable. We chose to treat this as an opportunity to assess the degree to which a lower-cost recruitment process could deliver the desired outcomes. If citizens' assemblies are to become part of regular political practice, it is important to consider ways in which the costs associated with them might be reduced.

166. We therefore worked closely with YouGov, as discussed in Chapter 2, to develop a different approach. Given that the success of this approach was mixed, it is important to draw lessons from this experience. As we indicated in Chapter 2, we do not draw the lesson that recruitment from an existing survey company panel is necessarily inappropriate. Nevertheless, we suggest two key requisites for its success:

a) Recruitment from a panel requires a large panel. If we can expect an acceptance rate of only around 1 per cent (although we think the measures that we outline below would increase that figure) and we wish to include hard-to-reach groups such as the young and members of ethnic minorities in proportion to their population shares, then a panel numbering in the tens of thousands is required. That is achievable only with areas significantly larger than South Yorkshire or the Solent region.

b) Recruitment takes time. Building on YouGov's past experience, we initially contacted potential assembly members only three-to-four weeks before the first assembly weekend. In retrospect, we realise that YouGov's experience was based on events where participants are asked to give up only a few hours of their time, not two weekends. Many of those we contacted said that they would like very much to take part, but that they already had commitments for one or both of the weekends. A greater lead time is therefore required. In addition, more time would allow more to be done in order to maximise the quality of the sample.

167. Several further possible improvements to the sampling process can be mooted:

a) Past citizens' assemblies have included meetings as part of the recruitment process. These were meetings held in local areas to which potential assembly members were invited in order to learn more about the assembly process and what they might be asked to do. The evidence from our own experience is that once assembly members have participated in assembly discussions, they are very keen to take part further. Similarly, the previous cases saw exceptionally high rates of participation: there was minimal drop-off both from the recruitment phase to the first assembly meeting and from weekend to weekend thereafter. Pre-meetings may therefore help to ensure that those who sign up are genuinely committed to the process.

b) The inclusion of financial incentives might stimulate the participation of citizens that are less interested in the topic and hence improve the overall diversity of the participants. As we have seen, while the assemblies were fairly diverse in term of ideas and political parties, they were composed by participants with extremely high interest in politics. However it is important also to consider the fact that monetary incentive might actually reduce the participation of some individuals because they assign a price to an activity. Some individuals whose leisure value is significantly higher than the assigned price might be dis-incentivized at least in theory. More importantly the inclusion of financial incentive might attract participants that have zero interest in the process and that might prove disruptive or apathetic. However Deliberative Polls routinely employ financial incentives generating good results, thus it seems that when the resources are available incentives are recommendable.

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## PREPARATION FOR THE ASSEMBLY DISCUSSIONS

168. The Research Directors of the two assemblies (Dr Alan Renwick and Professor Graham Smith) worked together to develop the programmes for the two events. We draw two key lessons from this:

a) First, it takes time. The programme needs to be carefully balanced, and each part needs to be game-planned to develop an expectation of how long it might take. We consulted widely at each stage, notably with the directors on past citizens' assemblies whose wealth of experience on how long different tasks might require, how long attention spans might reasonably be stretched, where breaks might best be placed, and so on, proved invaluable.

b) Second, it needs to be flexible. No amount of planning can predict exactly how the discussions will go. Some activities will take longer than expected, others will need less time. Sometimes (as we found in Assembly North) members will want to structure aspects of the discussion in ways that the organisers do not envisage. All of this needs to be allowed for.

169. The need for flexibility is one of several factors that make it imperative that assembly Chairs be well prepared. Chairs fulfil a difficult role. On the one hand, they need to understand very well the assembly members and the assembly's agenda in order to judge the mood of the assembly and steer proceedings appropriately. On the other hand, they should be somewhat detached from the core organising team in order to perform a fully impartial role. We did not always get this balance quite right:

we should, in retrospect, have involved assembly Chairs more deeply in preparatory discussions in order to bind them into the process.

170. Training of assembly facilitators, as well as other support staff or volunteers, is also crucial. We conducted all our training, assisted by lead facilitator Titus Alexander, on the Friday afternoon preceding the first weekend of each assembly. The lead facilitator was able also to offer advice where any difficulties arose during the assembly proceedings, and we held debriefing meetings at the end of each assembly day. The amount of advance training that we provided was thus limited. It appears that it was sufficient: as we have noted previously, the work of our volunteer facilitators was uniformly praised by assembly members and others who observed them in action. The degree to which this was down to good luck is unknowable. Given the importance of good facilitation, we suggest that a slightly longer training programme, with more opportunity for role-playing through the assembly schedule, could be advantageous.

171. Finally, we offer comments on the preparation of the assembly learning programme. In the pilot assemblies, as in other citizens' assemblies, this involved two elements: written materials that were sent to assembly members in advance; and presentations and discussions during the first assembly weekend. This programme must satisfy several requisites

a) It must be *wide-ranging*. Assembly members should hear about the widest possible variety of options and arguments.



- b) It must be unbiased. The materials should not intentionally or unintentionally treat any options more or less favourably than other options. That does not mean that, where a preponderance of views favours one option of another, that cannot be acknowledged. Rather, it requires that the range of views be fairly reflected.
  - c) It must be accessible. Assembly proceedings should be accessible to all members, whatever their educational backgrounds and prior experiences. Materials should therefore be written in straightforward English without jargon or unnecessary complexity.
172. We pursued the first and second of these requisites by consulting a wide range of experts both at the stage of planning the content of the briefing papers and after first drafts had been produced.

In some cases, experts pointed out potential unintended bias in some of the things we had written, and we changed them accordingly. We pursued the third objective by asking non-expert readers to check and comment on the draft papers. In addition to the main papers, we provided brief summary papers and summary videos, through which we sought to provide the easiest possible entry route into the material.

173. We could have taken these endeavours further had more time been available. We would have welcomed the opportunity to test out drafts on a wider range of audiences, both expert and non-expert. This would have included advocates of different perspectives, focus groups of randomly selected citizens, and plain English experts. We therefore recommend that future assemblies allow a minimum of three months (and preferably closer to six months) for the development of learning materials.

## 7.2 Event Logistics

### LOCATIONS, VENUES AND MEETING SPACES

174. The research team was conscious of a key insight from the Canadian, Dutch and Irish citizens' assemblies, which all highlighted the importance of positive member experiences for deliberation and retention. In particular, it was aware of how minor logistic problems could distract from deliberation, while good food and fun can contribute to higher retention.
175. These insights guided the team in its criteria for choosing the location and venues for the assembly weekends. These criteria included:
- a) centrality within the respective region;
  - b) proximity to public transport;
  - c) ease of access, disability access and family provision;
  - d) size and amenity of meeting rooms, accommodation and facilities;
  - e) flexibility in room and seating configuration.
176. While price was a factor in the final decisions, it was secondary to an emphasis on the quality of member experience. The assembly phases required venues that could cater for up to sixty people for plenary and small group discussions (i.e. 45 assembly members plus project team, facilitators, observers and guests). To achieve this, three different hotels were used over the four weekends (two in Southampton and one in Sheffield). However, the configuration of the main room was essentially the same in each and aimed for maximum flexibility. Six circular tables with seats for up to seven participants and two research support staff were arranged in the middle of the room. A table for session presenters was set to one

side at the front, although panel sessions involved a number of seats placed centrally. Also, at the front was a large screen and fixed microphone, while a mobile microphone was also available. Near the rear of the room was a table for research team members, while observers and VIPs sat in chairs at the back of the room (beyond the distance for easily hearing individual table conversations). The research team did not choose to use 'break out' rooms although they were available. Again learning from the experience of past assemblies, the team sought to keep the participants in the main room as much possible to encourage relationship building and deliberation. Wherever possible, food and beverages were also provided in the main room, although this often required people to return from an adjacent room. Regular breaks were factored into the programme.

177. It should be noted that most hotel venues are designed for short-session conferences with single speakers presenting against a lit screen, they are less suited to regular sessions of group work over two long days. Not surprisingly, post-assembly feedback from participants and research team members identified a number of challenges with the selected venues and meeting places. Although these varied between hotels, they included:
- a) poor acoustics for group discussions;
  - b) darkness and lack of air;
  - c) the cost of in-room food and additional beverages (e.g., alcohol); and
  - d) broken or unavailable hearing support technology.

### FOOD, CATERING AND 'TREATS'

178. Our focus on positive member experiences included an emphasis on food and catering. The assembly members and research team met for shared meals over the weekends, while there were regular breaks for drinks and snacks. Additional food and drinks were available outside the main room during sessions, while

individual dietary needs were catered for. Surprise 'treats' were planned to celebrate group achievements or for times when member energy might fade, while the opportunity was taken to celebrate one member's birthday with a cake.



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179. Such matters might seem trivial, but they are important in creating a relaxed and positive environment. A dehydrated participant can find group work more difficult, while good food can engender a sense of goodwill to help the group through the tougher moments of deliberation. It should be noted that the provision of specific member requirements and surprise treats can be challenging in terms of planning, timing within a

changing schedule, hotel procurement policy and cost. On more than one occasion a research team member 'snuck in' home-made cookies to have on hand should spirits wane. The success of this approach was demonstrated by post-assembly feedback from members, who overwhelmingly identified the quality of food and hotel rooms as a highlight.

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## PARTICIPANT SUPPORT AND COMPENSATION

180. Beyond the decision to provide good food, board and treats, the research team also sought other ways to recognize the commitment of assembly members across the two weekends. Although financial and other constraints prevented the direct reimbursement of members for their time and participation, the project offered compensation for travel and childcare. Child-care support was not requested by any assembly member, but many did request support for travel. This proved to be a logistical challenge as it required participants to complete university claim forms and provide receipts, before being entered into (very slow) university financial systems. Despite the best efforts of the

research team, some members had not been reimbursed for their expenses more than three months after they had been incurred. While the positive goodwill built up by the assemblies was high, this became a potential barrier to participation and retention for post-assembly activities.

181. An additional incentive for participation was the opportunity to attend a free event at Windsor Castle in January 2016. Hosted by St George's House, this brought the two assemblies together to reflect on their experiences and enjoy these unique and beautiful surroundings. Potential participants were made aware of this opportunity through the initial recruitment process.

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## ESTABLISHING IT INFRASTRUCTURE

182. A key decision of the research team was to emphasise online resources to support the preparation; between assembly reflection; and deliberation of members. It was felt that in order to increase wider public engagement with the Democracy Matters project the website could act as a hub that would allow the general public to access the same resources as the assembly members. The briefing papers that were produced for the assemblies were accordingly made available on the website. We felt strongly that any documents made available on the site should be done so in a digitally native format, so rather than simply upload the print ready PDF files, we created posts on the site out of the documents. This meant that the documents became searchable, didn't rely on third party software, were readable by off the shelf access software, easily shareable and responsive to screen size. In order to make the background information more accessible we also produced a series of videos that presented the relevant information in an easy to access format. In addition to this, the numerous endorsements of the project provided by politicians were also posted on the website. This served the purpose of demonstrating to assembly members that the process in which they were participating was widely supported and possessed some political importance. It also demonstrated to the wider public that such participatory initiatives could attract political support.

way that reflected the overall 'triple writing' strategy (see chapter 7 on 'Impact'). Thus, the 'For Academics' section contained reports on the initial findings of the assemblies; the 'For Journalists' section providing a series of press releases, often with a local focus, tracking the progress of the assemblies; and the 'For Politicians' section provided briefings on the project.

183. In designing the website three groups of people were identified as having a special, (as opposed to a general or local) interest in the project: academics, politicians and journalists. There was a separate section of the website for each of these groups that targeted information in a format appropriate to the audience in a

184. The Citizens Assembly website (<http://www.citizensassembly.co.uk/>) launched on the 14th September 2015. In the period to date (March 2016) 3,207 people have accessed the site with an average stay of 2 minutes 37 seconds. 85% of these were from the UK, nearly all of whom were in England. Within England, 35% were in London, probably reflecting the locations of academics, activists and the press, but the second and third positions were Sheffield and Southampton respectively on 13% and 10%. These two locations also had higher than average stays on the site. The site was mainly accessed via links shared on Social Media (30.3%), no doubt work that was out into the Facebook groups and the @Uksemblies twitter account. The next biggest group was direct access (29.6%) which includes people typing in the URL, or clicking links on webpages, emails etc. Then Search engines at 27% and tracked referrals make up the remainder. The biggest referee was the ERS site, followed by the Guardian, Crick Centre, Sheffield and New Economics Foundation.

185. Within the website the most popular pages were introductions to the Southampton and Sheffield assemblies and the About page for the whole project. From within the briefing papers pages, the Regional Assemblies page was the most popular, followed by Local Government explained, Greater Manchester Deal, Devolution Deals, and Sheffield Local Government.

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## 7.3 Assembly Resources

### HUMAN RESOURCES – RESEARCH TEAM

186. The project leadership team included five senior academics and the Chief Executive Officer of its impact partner, the Electoral Reform Society. The director of the project, Professor Matthew Flinders, provided overall leadership of this team and stewardship of the two assemblies. Each assembly led by an Academic Director (North: Dr Alan Renwick; South: Professor Graham Smith), who led the development of assembly schedules and oversaw the preparation of briefing materials and reports. These were immensely time consuming tasks and were greatly assisted by external support from members of the Advisory Group and researchers at the House of Commons Library. In addition, the project appointed a key facilitator (on a paid consultancy basis) to support the group facilitators, while it was greatly aided by the voluntary contributions of two assembly chairs who were the BBC's regional political editors.
187. The project appointed three dedicated staff: two full-time research fellows (one to manage logistics, qualitative research and Assembly North; the other to manage survey development, online communications and Assembly South) and a Nexus Officer from the Electoral Reform Society, who nurtured impact beyond academe. Additional casual research assistants were paid to provide support as needed.
188. Again, an accurate estimate of human resource requirements per assembly is difficult. As an indication, however, the project-wide logistics and event management for one assembly required in excess of 650 hours. This excludes the work of Academic Directors in preparing schedules and materials, the support of external recruitment processes, the survey design preparation and the logistics of the second assembly. Those planning assemblies in the future should be aware of these human resource demands and ideally allow at least six months before the first assembly event for planning and preparation.
189. The project appointed three dedicated staff: two full-time

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### HUMAN RESOURCES – STUDENT VOLUNTEERS AND TRAINING

189. An important decision of the research team was to recruit volunteers from graduate students at the participating universities. This decision was based on a number of factors (beyond just cost saving), including the exposure it provided students to leading-edge research in practice and the symbolic statement it made about youth democratic engagement. The students were trained (see section 6.1) and had opportunities to undertake the roles of small-group facilitator, group note-taker or logistical support. Electoral Reform Society staff also fulfilled some of these roles.
190. The recruitment of student facilitators reinforced a key design feature of the assemblies, which was an emphasis on facilitators serving the discussion in their groups and not acting as pseudo-experts. The research team provided support to the small group facilitators through its own expertise in areas of governance and devolution, as well as by the employment of a main facilitator to oversee training and group work.
191. Student volunteers also supported our research by ensuring that all small-group discussions were recorded and by taking notes using a protocol that focused on patterns in group discussion, discussion themes and body language.
192. Not all student volunteers wished to take on leadership or research roles, while some could not commit to both weekends. These students provided important logistical support around research tasks, including ensuring the completion of informed and legal consent documentation, coordination of reimbursement claims, and the management of group deliberation materials. They also provided vital event logistics support and quick response to member needs. As noted earlier, the research team was aware of how logistical issues could distract from deliberation and successful assembly events, hence, these roles were vital.
193. The commonality between these three roles was the colour of the T-shirt that the students wore, with them quickly (and affectionately) becoming known as 'the Tango Team'. One of the most prominent areas of post-assembly feedback from members was how much they appreciated the intelligence, skill, professionalism and generosity of the Tango Team members. It is the shared view of the research team that the contribution of these student volunteers was amongst the greatest successes of the assembly pilots, and pivotal to the quality deliberation that occurred within small groups.

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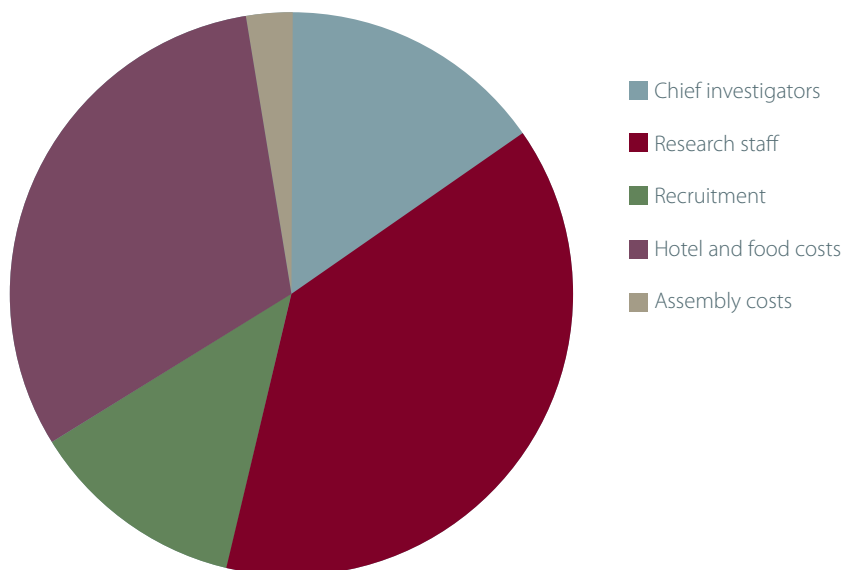
### FINANCIAL RESOURCES

194. The UK citizens' assemblies were only made possible through the support of an accelerated impact grant from the UK Economic and Social Research Council. These grants are capped at £200,000 per project, which provided an upper limit for funding of assembly activities.
195. This situation had practical planning implications. We noted above the constraints it placed on our recruitment strategy. In addition, some quotes for hotel accommodation over four weekends would have absorbed more than a quarter of our budget. Among cost-limiting measures, we decided not to give incentive payments to participants, guest speakers were unpaid, and we recruited volunteer helpers from local university students. We learned from previous assemblies to prioritise funding for accommodation, catering, comfort and 'treats' to reward assembly participants.
196. Although an accurate cost-per-assembly is difficult due to differences between the assemblies that are discussed elsewhere in this report, a rough estimate of approximately £16,000 per

weekend can be made (i.e., £64,000 total). This figure distributes shared costs (such as participant recruitment, promotion and equipment), but does not include other researcher-related costs (such as per-diem staff costs, travel and the appointment of three dedicated staff).

197. The Chart 7.1 indicates the proportion of funding spent on different key items (but excluding overheads and indirect costs):

**FIGURE 7.1  
ASSEMBLY FINANCIAL  
COMMITMENTS**



Note: Assembly costs is the heading for the miscellaneous costs which include facilitator costs, recorders and microphones, promotion (banners & t-shirts, travel reimburse, certificates and stationery and additional training costs (rooms and food)

198. It should be noted, in conclusion, that these costs were, in some respects, markedly different from those that could be expected for an official citizens' assembly:

- a) On the one hand, parts of our budget were devoted to research on the assemblies rather than the assemblies themselves: this is, after all, a research project, and it is essential that we can analyse clear evidence and communicate findings to a range of audiences. An official assembly might not conduct such detailed research – though we would strongly urge that a research component be built in to enable lessons to be drawn.
- b) On the other hand, much of the work done for these assemblies – by members of the core research team, the

student volunteers, the guest speakers, and our external experts and advisers – was unpaid. The Electoral Reform Society provided very considerable 'benefits in kind' releasing its staff members to develop the project website, implement the public relations strategy, and support the assembly weekends. Further support was provided by the Southern Policy Centre and a number of other organisations. YouGov also generously offered its services at a much reduced rate.

199. Putting together these considerations with the observations we have made above on the desirability of further developing the recruitment process and of enhancing processes of assembly preparation, our advice would be that any future assemblies of a similar scale and duration to these pilots should seek a budget significantly greater than the £200,000 that was available to us.

## BOX 7.1: Key Lessons

1. Citizens' assemblies are a little like an iceberg in the sense that the much greater part of the project takes place and exists far beyond and beneath the actual event itself.
2. Preparation is crucial, especially in relation to the timing and location of the assembly.
3. It is difficult to expect research staff to also handle and manage the logistical demands of delivering an assembly. Ideally a project management officer would lead on the delivery of the assembly so that the researchers can focus on data collection and preparation.
4. Democracy costs. Citizens' assemblies take time and they take money but they are also an important social investment that can have long-term benefits.
5. Assembly members need to be made to feel special and to feel welcome. Treats, special events, the recognition of birthdays, etc. can all be critical in creating a positive environment.

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# Chapter Eight: A Focus on Impact

Read this part if you are interested in:

- How to deliver ‘engaged scholarship’
- Why impact matters in terms of nourishing the research ecosystem.
- The ‘politics of impact’ and how this needs to be acknowledged and managed.
- Innovative bridging mechanisms that can manage relationships with potential research users.
- The ‘art of translation’ and the limits of framing research findings to achieve an impact.

## 8.1 Impact Strategy, Challenges and Outcomes

200. Although the citizens’ assembly pilot project is an experiment in democratic practice, we wanted to ensure that as well as learning as much as possible about what works best, that it has as much impact on the real world as possible. To do this the project team made contact with a range of democratic practitioners ranging from NGOs, government officials and civil servants, highlighting the importance of the work that was being carried out by the assembly. This was crucial in two respects. Firstly, it needed to be meaningful for people to participate in the assembly. This could only be achieved with a sense that the deliberation would be taken seriously and listened to by those in positions of power. Secondly, we believe that the conversations and debate that took place in the assembly are incredibly pertinent to the constitutional changes that are currently taking place. It is therefore only natural that we would seek to ensure that the thoughts of the assembly be included where possible into existing policy processes.

201. In Assemblies North and South, this meant getting key stakeholders in the Solent region and the Sheffield City Region to attend the assembly and present their views on the topic of devolution. But crucially it also gave the assembly members a chance to quiz them on the relative merits of their proposals in a process that should be taken on board by the relevant authorities. Not only did it give the assembly members an opportunity to ask questions of their elected representatives, but it allowed the representatives to hear what an informed citizenry thought about the plans for devolution. The political importance of this was demonstrated by the opening of the Assembly North by Lord Blunkett, and the attendance of Chief Executive of Sheffield City Council John Mothersole and that of Leader of Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council Sir Steve Houghton. In Assembly South this was demonstrated by the attendance of local MP Alan Whitehead and of the Leader of Hampshire County Council Roy Perry. This was in addition to endorsements of the process by several Members of Parliament and in the South the direct participation of several local councillors.

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### ELECTORAL REFORM SOCIETY ROLE

202. The decision to appoint a Nexus Officer based at the Electoral Reform Society (ERS) was predicated on the need to ensure that the Democracy Matters project could maximise the political impact of the project. By situating the Nexus Officer within the ERS, that member of the project team was able to utilise the already extensive network of contacts that the organisation already possessed. The Nexus Officer was also able to grow that network, creating contacts with a range of civil society organisations and politicians. The direct involvement of the ERS also injected into the project key messaging and digital media

skills. This meant that the information being produced by and about the assemblies could be fed into mainstream, local and online news and comment outlets. ERS input into the overall design of the process further enabled a wider audience for the work of the assemblies by ensuring that aspects of the project with particular salience for politicians or the media could receive the requisite amount of publicity. In advocating for a UK-wide Constitutional Convention, the ERS had built up a network of supporters and allies which therefore created a ready-made audience for the work of the assemblies.

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## STRATEGY AND CONTEXT

203. The political context of the project has changed significantly since the original grant was awarded. The likelihood of a UK-wide constitutional convention diminished in the aftermath of the Conservative Party forming a majority government following the May 2015 General Election. However in the absence of a constitutional convention the Government has vigorously rolled out a programme of English devolution (alongside further powers to Scotland and Wales). This has meant the introduction of English Votes for English Laws (EVEL) and the signing of several 'devolution deals'. There have also been concerns raised that devolution within England was proceeding at too fast a pace with insufficient public consultation.<sup>8</sup>
204. In order for the project to fulfil its in-built aim of maximising the political impact that could be achieved, it was decided to adapt to the new political reality that was created after the election. This meant, on the one hand, focussing on how deliberative approaches could be used in the policy realm more

generally (thus also informing thinking about how a citizen-led constitutional convention could work), and, on the other hand, focussing the agenda of the assemblies on the very live issue of devolution within England. This meant that the possible political impact of the project was not confined to one area of interest but could be felt in multiple directions. This could only be possible if the research and outputs from the assemblies could be read in ways that fitted into diverse areas of knowledge and interest. Thus, the assemblies are of interest to those concerned with local government given the detailed nature with which that area and the changes being enacted therein were treated, but equally the assemblies are of value to those who wish to see more popular participation in policy formation and decision-making processes and to understand how that might work. This was possible because the diverse interests of the research team were coupled with an outward facing organisation that could translate the lessons of the assemblies into meaningful political and practical knowledge for a variety of groups.

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## POLITICAL IMPACT

205. In this context, the project has achieved a significantly high level of engagement and impact comprised of various elements. These include cross-party and senior level endorsements such as the Chair of Parliament's principal constitutional committee, the Public Administration & Constitutional Affairs Committee; referencing of the assemblies in the Communities and Local Government Select Committee inquiry into the Cities and Local Government Devolution Bill; support from and continued contact with local MPs in Hampshire and South Yorkshire; support from senior figures within most major British parties (Conservative, Labour, Liberal Democrat, Green, Scottish National Party); use of the project as a case study in the All Party Parliamentary Group on Decentralisation, Devolution and Reform inquiry headed by Lord Kerslake; and invitations to submit oral evidence from the project before the House of Lords Constitution Committee. Events are due to take place with a range of organisations including the Local Government Association and the Centre for Cities.

206. All this has taken place within a strategy of disseminating the assemblies on two levels in a way that engages with and adapts to constantly evolving political realities. The first strand consisted of presenting the assemblies as both a pilot for a UK-wide constitutional convention and as a crucial way of letting the public have their say about how their region should be governed, and the second of presenting the assemblies as an important democratic innovation that can help the political process and combat anti-politics. The combination of both narratives has helped to garner interest from national politicians (including David Blunkett, Natalie Bennett and Dominic Grieve), figures in local government (including council leaders and chief executives), the trade union movement (CWU), and civil society groups (e.g. Citizens' Advice), with already one group having hosted a spin-off event in the Isle of Wight.

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## MEDIA

207. There was widespread dissemination of press releases and broader information to the ERS's existing media network as well as building contacts with local outlets. The role of the respective chairs of the assemblies as the BBC political editors of Yorkshire and the South of England facilitated features on the Assemblies on the *Sunday Politics* in their different regions. Overall there were 82 recorded 'media hits' between the 11th September and

2nd December 2015 in various formats including blog posts, newspaper articles as well as television and radio discussions. Some of the newspaper outlets included the *Financial Times*, *The Guardian* and *Sheffield Star*, while there was also considerable interest from political bloggers (such as OpenDemocracy) and industry news vehicles (such as university websites and local government commentators).

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<sup>8</sup> See, for example, the report by the Communities and Local Government Committee on the Cities and Local Government Devolution Act, *Devolution: the next five years and beyond*.

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## PARLIAMENTARY OPPORTUNITIES

208. Lord Purvis of Tweed introduced the Constitutional Convention Bill into the House of Lords on 1st June, 2015 as a Private Members' Bill. This was complemented by the introduction of the Constitutional Convention Bill (No. 2) in the House of Commons by Graham Allen MP on 22nd July, 2015. The introduction of these Bills calling for a citizen-led constitutional convention has meant that there has been several debates in both Houses of Parliament concerning the remit, form and composition of a future constitutional convention. This has added to the wider political relevance of the Democracy Matters project as the very questions of the recruitment of participants, the structure of the proceedings, and the nature of

citizen-led deliberation being debated in Parliament are those which this project addresses.<sup>9</sup> Although it is unlikely that either of these Bills will make the passage to Royal Assent, it is clear from the fact of their introduction and from the various questions raised during their consideration that this project has been able to help shape the debate around what a future constitutional convention may look like. Moreover, by producing concrete evidence on the delivery of two citizens' assemblies, this project will be a key reference point for future attempts to initiate a citizen-led process for constitutional change.

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## LACK OF A FORMAL MANDATE

209. The lack of a direct government mandate as the basis for the assemblies' deliberations was a key challenge that was recognised from the onset of the project. One of the major difficulties associated with this was the risk that it would be extremely difficult to persuade prospective assembly members to take part as there was no clear way in which the outcome of the deliberations would have a clear effect on policy. The other major challenge associated with this was the project could be consigned to political oblivion if it could not find a way of insisting upon its relevance to current political issues. The first challenge was dealt with by ensuring that as many local and national politicians as possible were brought into the process and these endorsements and words of encouragement were shown to the assembly members. Letters were sent from the House of Lords to the participants and videos made showing the support of local MPs, with written messages of support

being posted on the website. Moreover, local politicians, especially those involved directly in the City Deals attended the assemblies and fielded questions from the participants. The second challenge was met by opening avenues of communication with both the Department of Communities and Local Government and the Cabinet Office to impress upon them the importance of this project as an experiment in democratic participation. Through our wider political engagement strategy with parliamentary committees, opposition political parties, the Scottish Government and a range of civil society organisations it has been possible to ensure that the assemblies have fed into numerous reports and will inform thinking on diverse issues from political (dis)engagement, to local government reform and wider constitutional issues. So, in spite of not having official government support, this project has still been able to help shape policymaking and continues to do so.

### BOX 8.1: Key Lessons

1. Impact cannot be seen as separate to the core research or engagement project, or as an afterthought.
2. This project adopted a methodology based around the co-production of research and the engagement of potential research-users in all phases of the research process.
3. The project delivered significant levels of demonstrable impact, engagement and relevance but this reflected the investment of significant resources at the very earliest stages of the project in building a supportive community of potential research-users.
4. This demanded sensitive political antennae on the part of the research team in order to understand the subtleties of how to frame project outputs, how to use informal and formal processes and how to create new opportunities.
5. Working with a practitioner partner (i.e. the Electoral Reform Society) as a core part of the research team was vital, as was employing a Nexus Officer to bridge the relationship between this project and the broader political and public sphere.
6. In a research team that includes academics and practitioners the existence of different goals, objectives and incentive systems will inevitably need to be navigated through open dialogue.

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201516/dhansrd/text/151211-0001.htm#15121154000397>.

# Chapter Nine: So What? Where Next?

## Key Findings And Implications

Read this part if you are interested in:

- How the focus of this report relates to recent developments in relation to English devolution and the announcement in the 2016 Budget of new 'devo deals'.
- What worked in terms of the assemblies and the broader public and policy engagement process.
- What worked less well and how that might be rectified in future initiatives.
- Why running citizens assemblies are inevitably risky and tiring.
- Why should anyone beyond the two case study regions or beyond the UK actually care about this research? So what?
- Where does this pilot project leave us in terms of understanding politics, both in terms of 'politics in theory' and 'politics in practice'? Where next?

210. On 16 March 2016 the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Rt Hon, George Osborne presented the government's budget and outlined a number of significant additions to the English regional Government agenda. Three new 'deals' were announced: East Anglia (Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough); Greater Lincolnshire (Lincolnshire, North Lincolnshire and North-East Lincolnshire); and West of England (Bristol, Bath & North-East Somerset, North Somerset, South Gloucestershire). Further devolutions deals were also announced for Greater Manchester and Liverpool but the specific details of these new agreements is secondary to the basic issue that the nature and structure of democracy in England is being re-shaped. Many committees and commentators have already criticized the style of government that is driving this process with its apparent preference for elite-to-elite discussions. Democracy – as the New Economics Foundation has argued, remains the missing link in the devolution debate.

211. However, there are important signs that the need to engage with the public in a meaningful manner about the opportunities and challenges offered by devolution in England is being acknowledged by the government. References to public engagement have therefore begun to emerge in the most recent devolution agreements in a manner that was only implicit in previous deals. The West of England devolution agreement therefore states, 'The West of England Combined Authority is accountable to local people for the successful implementation of the devolution deal; consequently, the government expects the West of England Combined Authority to monitor and evaluate their deal in order to demonstrate and report on progress.'

The East Anglia Devolution Agreement similarly requires that 'leaders will take [the deal] to each council for full debate and consultation with relevant local stakeholders'.<sup>11</sup>

212. These requirements may not satisfy the demands of observers who see the need for a more radical and far-reaching approach to public engagement and democratic renewal but they do at least focus attention on how local and regional politicians and officials can innovate in relation to democracy. Put slightly differently, if the opportunities generated by English devolution in terms of economic growth and public sector reform are so significant then it appears unwise to risk creating a situation whereby the first elections for regional mayors fail to generate a credible level of democratic legitimacy. This risk brings this report full-circle and back to its core objectives in terms of (1) assessing the public's capacity to engage in issues of complex constitutional policy making in the UK and (2) to use this assessment to derive insights into the public's views on English regional devolution. With these objectives in mind the key findings are:

- a) Given the appropriate support and mechanisms, citizens are more than able to engage with questions of complex constitutional policy and come to evidence-based conclusions in relation to specific questions.
- b) Overall the pilot assemblies conducted for this research suggest that the public are generally in favour of English regional government but want to see a greater range of more significant powers devolved to a more robust political structure that is less dependent on a 'metro mayor'.

<sup>11</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/508115/The\\_East\\_Anglia\\_Devolution\\_Agreement\\_FINAL\\_with\\_signatures\\_and\\_logos.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/508115/The_East_Anglia_Devolution_Agreement_FINAL_with_signatures_and_logos.pdf)



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c) This research suggests that the public are not really 'anti-political' or 'anti-politician' but that there is a real appetite for 'doing politics differently' in the sense of cultivating new democratic spaces and processes that are less partisan and more inclusive.

213. To this list we could add the ten core findings that are included

in the Conclusions and Recommendations (page 3). However the aim of this concluding section is really to range a little more freely and widely in terms of reflecting on the insights of this project and dealing with the 'So What?' question that should really drive any publicly-funded social science. One way of doing this is to think in terms of three questions – 'What worked?', 'What did not work?' and – finally – 'So What?'

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## 9.1 What Worked?

214. In many ways one of the most surprising elements of this project was that the research team was actually able to design and deliver two large citizens' assemblies – while collecting data and delivering a significant policy impact – within the financial and time constraints of the project. The research team therefore worked incredibly well across a number of institutions and within a highly political context. The planning, training and design elements of the projects worked extremely well but in many ways what allowed the assemblies to 'work' was an understanding of three issues: (1) the need to build community spirit (or social capital) within each assembly; (2) the need to be flexible and responsive to new demands from members; and (3) therefore the need to build-in some reflexivity within the assembly process.
215. Attending an event that is labelled as a 'citizens' assembly', that may be focused on a highly technical or fairly abstract issue and where you are highly unlikely to know anyone else is obviously quite a daunting affair. This may explain why 'no shows' were quite high in relation to this project and why recruitment in general tended to be difficult. Moreover, persuading people who have little interest, knowledge or confidence in questions of politics or democracy that they might actually enjoy giving up a significant amount of their spare time to sit on an assembly is clearly not going to be easy. These challenges become even greater when issues of, for example, having English as a second language or different cultural expectations about how political issues should be decided are considered. What really worked in relation to Assembly North and Assembly South is that the broad project team (volunteers, facilitators, researchers, staff from the Electoral Reform Society etc.) had been instructed about the need to make assembly members feel welcome from the moment they arrived at the venue. This supportive and friendly atmosphere is underpinned by making sure that the members' physical needs and personal arrangements are taken care of as far as possible. Meeting assembly members on the first morning with a tray of hot bacon and sausage sandwiches (and, of course, with other options) was a really positive way of building relationships.
216. What also worked really well was the manner in which the organisers were attuned to the needs of the assemblies in quite subtle ways. It is, for example, quite easy to detect changes in the atmosphere within an assembly setting when the members are – for one reason or another – not happy, frustrated, bored or tired. Having staff who are free to act as 'spotters' to identify grumbles and groans and bring them immediately to the attention of the facilitator and research team was crucial in allowing the assemblies to evolve and mature very much in line with the participants. This helped with the process of ensuring that the participants took ownership of the assembly themselves rather than being more passive participants in a process that was imposed upon them.
217. Examples of the assembly taking control include the manner in which Assembly North was aware of its own lack of social diversity and demanded an inquiry into the issue due to concerns that any final report or recommendations would not be seen as being credible without a formal position on the topic. A second example would be the use of 'speed dating' sessions to cultivate interaction between witnesses and assembly members and to act against fatigue and boredom. A final example was the manner in which both assemblies were willing to ask the research team for more information on specific issues, often using the internet, and also to request that specific individuals be invited to speak at later sessions. A balance therefore needs to be brokered and maintained between the need for some overall level of structure and planning, on the one hand, alongside the capacity to be flexible and responsive as things develop. In this sense, citizens' assemblies can be quite risky undertakings in the sense that you do not really know how the individuals that turn up will get on with each other, whether an element of community spirit will emerge or how specific witness sessions or events will work. This is why 'designing for democracy' is crucial, as is understanding that citizens' assemblies are a much deeper and demanding process than a series of open meetings on an issue.
218. What this all points to – and what this project seemed to achieve – is the need for an element of reflexivity at all stages in the assembly process. How are things going? What needs to change? Is everyone happy? Has anyone gone quiet? This reflexivity can be generated informally over lunch break or tea break discussions but is best also formalized into the design through regular debriefs, research team meetings and by having a Steering Group composed of elected assembly members whose role it is to report issues and concerns (good and bad) back to the research team. It would be possible to take this focus on 'what worked?' into a number of areas and in many ways to use the question as an entry-point to review most of the core findings of the project but policy learning generally emerges from failure rather than success and there is little point re-stating issues that have been discussed earlier. Two issues can therefore be highlighted to conclude this section: energy and fun.
219. Citizens' assemblies are high-energy, high-stress, high-emotion events and the demands in terms of emotional energy on the research team, facilitators and everyone involved should not be underestimated. This, to some extent, reflects the need to be constantly aware of the changing atmosphere or vibe within the assembly and responsive to the needs of specific individuals or groups. However, what seems to have worked very well in Assembly North and Assembly South is that the Research Directors delivered a good balance between keeping the pace of the assemblies quite high so that participants were stimulated and would not get bored or distracted, while not exhausting the participants or encouraging



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'drop outs'. The atmosphere in tone and style of both assemblies was therefore one in which the agenda was dynamic and demanding. On occasions members did suggest that they were being overloaded with information or were simply getting too tired but overall delivering a high-energy experience seemed to motivate assembly members in a positive way.

220. This flows into a point that has already been made in earlier sections – the focus on fun. Making democracy fun might seem slightly naïve but there is also a basic point that people are more willing to engage in any project or discussion if they feel safe and feel that they will enjoy themselves. And in both assemblies the participants did enjoy themselves. This is clear from the data and the feedback. It is also reflected in the impressive retention rates between the two weekends and in the incredibly high number

of participants who said they wanted to stay in touch with the project, who took the time and effort to attend the event at Windsor Castle and who continue to communicate with each other via the assembly Facebook pages. The emphasis on fun could be taken too far and to the detriment of a focus on the serious political issues that form the topic of any inquiry but at the same time remembering that the assembly members are essentially volunteers who are giving up their time is important. High points of the assemblies therefore include Matthew Flinders telling very bad jokes and lining-up assembly members right across the main assembly room as if they were planets in the sky (to reflect the differing powers in each of the various devo deals).

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## 9.2 What Did Not Work?

221. Overall the 'what worked?' against the 'what did not work?' tally is very positive and this (once again) reflects the skills and commitment of the whole research team and of everyone who contributed with such enthusiasm. And to some extent the whole point of a 'pilot' study is to test 'what works' and 'what does not work'. Phrased in this manner even failures can be interpreted as successes! However, there are probably three main areas – recruitment, resources and realism - where the experience of the project suggests a need to reflect on the lessons that might be learned.

222. To raise the issue of recruitment and representativeness (again) is not to suggest failure but simply to acknowledge that for a range of reasons the social diversity in both assemblies was not as representative of the broader society than would be necessary if these pilots were, for example, 'up-scaled' to the national level. To some extent the 'up-scaling' process may itself solve this problem. A larger event might have more resources, more time to plan and prepare, greater public visibility that would assist with encouraging individuals to accept invitations to participate. A larger assembly would by its very nature create more capacity in terms of reflecting the broad diversity of modern society and procedures for 'topping up' through targeted recruitment could also be adopted. However, one of the most valuable insights generated by this project has been into the capacity of major polling and survey companies to recruit members from their existing panel lists. There is clearly a strong self-selecting bias amongst those members of society with the skills, time or inclination to sign-up to polling or survey companies. Put slightly differently, those sections of society who appear to be at the wrong end of increasing levels of democratic inequality are probably not likely to be signing-up to these companies (let alone interested in filling in numerous surveys). This is not to say that polling companies do not have a vital role to play in supporting democratic innovations but it is to suggest that this partnership may have to explore more proactive and community-focused forms of recruitment.

223. If representation provides the first issue for challenging elements of this project then resources provides the second. There is little doubt that running ambitious and professional citizens' assemblies involves a certain level of investment. However, many of the costs involved are not readily apparent until the actual assembly process

has been initiated. What initially might appear a rather generous budget can quickly be consumed by a range of unexpected charges from the costs of hiring audio equipment through to the costs charged by hotels for pens and paper (and water). Even the most cursory list of the functions that must be undertaken long before an assembly meets for the first time provides a sense of the potential costs – recruitment of staff, website creation and maintenance, venue booking, networking costs, training facilitators, ordering food and refreshments, booking hotel rooms, preparing information materials, booking transport, bringing international advisors to the UK, organising childcare, hiring trained facilitators, enlisting assembly members, etc. These are elements of the assembly process that may lie below the visible waterline for most funders and participants but they are crucial elements of the process on which success depends. In the case of this pilot project our resources did 'work' in the sense that formally the final costs for the project came in just a fraction above the initial £200k budget.

224. But in reality the resource issue did not really work as the project was 'topped up' by significant additional investments from the University of Southampton and the University of Sheffield. YouGov also provided huge support to this project at way below market value, St George's House were incredibly generous in funding events at Windsor Castle, Katie Ghose dedicated huge amounts of time and energy to the project as a 'contribution in kind' and none of the academic leads received any significant funding at all for their time on the project. The facilitators, notetakers, and other assistants were all volunteers, speakers were offered travel costs but no fee, assembly members were not paid in any way for their time and both Peter Henley and Len Tingle acted as Chairs for Assembly South and Assembly North (respectively) out of a commitment to the values and ambitions of the project. The point being made is simply that citizens' assemblies cannot be undertaken 'on the cheap'. Indeed the risk of attempting to run a low-budget assembly is that a mechanism that is intended to build confidence might actually, by raising the public's expectations but then failing to fulfil them, contribute to disaffection rather than address it.
225. The issue with resources is not so much an example of failure but a plea for realism about the inevitable costs of democracy. The Houses of Parliament cost a significant amount of money to run each year, so does every local authority up and down the country

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and so will the offices of the regional mayors that will take office from 2017 onwards. Elections also cost a significant amount of money to administrate and when placed in this wider context the cost-benefit analysis associated with citizens' assemblies might from the results of this project be seen as very attractive.

226. The Democracy Matters project was initially conceived within an environment in which the chances of a national citizens' assembly or convention on the constitution looked possible. This created an urgent need to test exactly how this might be delivered should politicians and policy-makers decide on this course of action in the wake of the 2015 General Election. The wind was, to some extent, taken out of this debate by the election of a Conservative Government with a working majority at the election. The Conservative Party's rejection of the need for a constitutional assembly or convention clearly reduced the chances of Assembly North or Assembly South being formally established or supported by the Government. In this sense the Democracy Matters was just another academic project and could not claim any special position or relationship with the Government's policy-making process. We could obviously – and have – fed the research findings into the policy-making

process through both formal and informal channels but there was always a sense of a missing link between the project and the formal political architecture. We were an orphan project that was desperate to be if not adopted then formally recognized as being an important part of the debate. At the other extreme, the Citizens' Assembly on Constitutional Reform in British Columbia was not only created by the respective government with a remit to formally report back to the government, but they were also empowered with the capacity to take their recommendations directly to the public in the form of a binding provincial referendum.

227. Turning a negative into a positive once again, what is interesting about this project is just how much media and policy impact it was able to have without being a formally constituted undertaking at the behest of either the Government or Parliament. But in terms of closing 'the representation gap' and using the assemblies as the fulcrum of a much larger national debate about governance and democracy there is a certain sense of 'what might have been' had this project had formal government support.

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## 9.3 So What?

228. 'Disaffected democrats' and 'critical citizens' may well look at this report and think 'so what?' Why does any of this actually matter? Our response to this would be simple – because democracy matters. Indeed, one of the truisms of modern life is that even if you are not interested in politics then politics will certainly be interested in you. It will shape your life and those of your family and friends. It will demand your money and it may even support you in times of need. Such broad arguments might seem remote from the everyday politics of Eastleigh or East Hull but in many ways this gap is far less remote than you might think. In a global context in which levels of disaffection and disengagement from traditional democratic politics appears to be increasing this project has examined how to design and deliver a new way of 'doing' politics that is inclusive rather than exclusive, is flexible and responsive instead of rigid and closed, that emphasizes democratic listening as well as democratic voice and that offers the potential to build bridges across communities, regions and nations.

229. The evidence for this is found in the data and graphs that abound in this report. The findings are not sensational or dramatic but they do reveal a huge amount about the capacity and potential of men and women (in Eastleigh and East Hull and beyond) to make a valuable and informed contribution to complex questions of constitutional policy making. They reveal the manner in which people can and will listen and change their minds and how when faced with the evidence and facts (rather than the stereotypes and mythology) that the public's attitudes can become far more balanced and constructive, possibly even quite positive. That is a critical point. As recent studies have revealed, there is a huge difference between the public's 'quick thinking' in relation to issues of politics and attitudes about politicians (generally aggressive, negative, belligerent, etc.), compared with their 'slow thinking' about the same issues (far more balanced, empathetic, constructive, etc.). In this sense what citizens' assemblies really seem to offer is a new democratic space that helps nurture or facilitate 'slow thinking'.<sup>12</sup>

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## WHERE NEXT?

230. This is a question that opens-up a range of options and possibilities. Some scholarly, some practical, some realistic, some hopeless but all equally important. Where next for the academic team really revolves around completing the analysis of the data and then producing and publishing a range of papers and articles. This will include a practitioner guidance note that will be distributed through a range of national and international platforms and also a small number of academic papers that present the main findings of the project. The project team will also explore possible funding

opportunities to develop this research, possibly in relation to other democratic innovations, projects in other countries or in relation to the challenges of 'up-scaling' in the British context and particularly in relation to the connection between assembly design and delivery and issues of extreme political salience.

231. Where next in relation to the external policy impact of this research really depends on the changing political dynamic within the UK and within England, on the outcome of the EU referendum and on the results of the first mayoral elections

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<sup>12</sup> Stoker, G Hay, C and Barr, M. 2016. 'Fast Thinking: Implications for Democratic Politics', *European Journal of Political Research*, 55(1), 3-21. <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1475-6765.12113/abstract?sessionid=4D56729CA13F01E86DD5BF16FB175183.f02t02>

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in 2017. As noted above, there are signs that the government and local leaders are recognising the need to engage with the public in the design and implementation stage, rather than simply giving the public a vote on a model of government that has effectively been imposed upon them. In order to retain a commitment to balance and impartiality it is important to note that all the 'devo deals' do depend on approval by locally elected and locally accountable politicians and the broad policy of English devolution was included in the Conservatives General Election manifesto in 2015 but these facts appear to do little to offset a broader sense of concern, even frustration, with the lack of meaningful local public engagement.

232. The Democracy Matters team will therefore continue to work with combined authorities, local authorities and community groups throughout England in helping to promote and deliver evidence-based *informed* public engagement and this work is likely to grow in importance as the first round of mayoral elections approach. The bigger question, however, lies not in

relation to English regional governance but in relation to a far bigger set of questions concerning the changing nature of British democracy and the coherence of the constitutional system as it currently exists. Devolution, whether to the constituent nations of the UK or to the constituent regions of England clearly places pressure on certain core elements of the Westminster Model (a unitary state, parliamentary sovereignty, etc.). How long these tensions and internal contradictions can be tolerated, how the centrifugal forces that seem to have been unleashed can be managed and vented without the emergence of a 'dis-United Kingdom' remain to be seen. Moreover as governments around the world experiment with new forms of deliberative democracy it may well be that a future government in the UK is open to exploring the benefits and opportunities offered by a national citizens' assembly or convention on the constitution. If that 'window of opportunity' were to open then the Democracy Matters project will have played a major part in preparing the ground and thinking differently about designing for democracy.

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# Appendices

## A – Assembly and Project Team

### A-1 - CHAIRS AND FACILITATORS

#### Assembly North

*Academic Director:* Alan Renwick

*Chair:* Len Tingle

*Lead Facilitator:* Titus Alexander

#### *Group Facilitators:*

Toby Abbs, Ruth Beresford, Rhianna Camsell, Doug Cowan, Lauren Craik, Alice Day, Joshua Forstenzer, David Hall, Sacha Healey, Rebecca Holloway, Joe Hunt, Charley Jarrett, Dominic Jeffrey, Jason Leman, Alexander McColl, Indra Mangule, Lucy Parry, Helena Taylor, Chris Terry, Dominic Trendall, James Weinberg, Kate Wilkinson, Edward Winder, and Hui-Fen Wu.

#### Assembly South

*Academic Director:* Graham Smith

*Chair:* Peter Henley

*Lead Facilitator:* Titus Alexander

#### *Group Facilitators:*

Michael Awang, Sherise Brooks, Daniel Devine, Kerim Halil, Susanna House, Darren Hughes, Anna Killick, Magdelina Kitanova, Rebecca Kulidzan, Dominika Kumor, Susan Mlewa, Josiah Mortimer, Charlie Roche, Orsolya Szabo, Stuart Thomas, Gefion Thuermer and Viktor Valgardsson.

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### A-2 - PROJECT TEAM

#### Research Team

The Democracy Matters team is led by Professor Matthew Flinders (University of Sheffield).

The co-investigators are Professor Will Jennings (University of Southampton), Dr Alan Renwick (University College London) and Professor Graham Smith (University of Westminster).

Other research team members are Katie Ghose, Edward Molloy, (both Electoral Reform Society), Dr Brenton Prosser (University of Sheffield), Dr Paolo Spada and Professor Gerry Stoker (both University of Southampton).

#### Research Support

The project received important support from numerous people from a range of organizations, these included: Dr Rosie Campbell (Birkbeck College, London); John Denham and Izaak Wilson (both Southern Policy Centre); Mark Sandford (House of Commons Library); Will Brett, Doug Cowan, and Josiah Mortimer (Electoral Reform Society); Lucy Parry and Helena Taylor (University of Sheffield); Matt Ryan and John Boswell (University of Southampton).

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### A-3 – INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT NETWORKS

We are extremely grateful to our international advisors, who included the Academic Directors of the four official citizens' assemblies that have taken place to date around the world: Professor Ken Carty (British Columbia Citizens' Assembly), Professor David Farrell (Irish Constitutional Convention), Professor Jonathan Rose (Ontario Citizens' Assembly), and Professor Henk van der Kolk (Dutch Civic Forum).

We also extend our thanks to the Advisory Board, who included: Simon Burrell (Involve); Ken Carty (University of British Columbia); Francis Davis

and John Denham (Southern Policy Centre); David Farrell (University College Dublin); Wendy Faulkner (Beltane Network); Ailsa Henderson (University of Edinburgh); John Keane (University of Sydney); Nicola McEwen (Centre on Constitutional Change); Peter Riddell (Institute for Government); Jonathan Rose (Queen's University, Ontario); Alexandra Runswick (Unlock Democracy); Willie Sullivan (Electoral Reform Society, Scotland); Joe Twyman (YouGov); Henk van der Kolk (Universiteit Twente); Clodagh Harris (University College Cork).

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## B – Weekend Schedules

### ASSEMBLY NORTH WEEKEND 1 Learning and Consultation Schedule

#### *Day 1*

- Survey of members
- Introductions (small groups)
- Setting values and ground rules (small groups and plenary)
- Reflection on experiences of local government (small groups & plenary)
- Introduction of core questions (plenary)
- Expectations of local government (small groups)
- Local government now (lecture and small groups)

#### *Day 2*

- Introduction to reform options (plenary and small groups)
- Hearing and questioning witnesses on options (plenary)
- Generating further questions for witnesses (small groups)
- Question time with witnesses (plenary)
- Reflections on options (small groups)
- Requests for further information (small groups and plenary)
- Survey of members

## B-2 ASSEMBLY WEEKEND 2

### Learning, Deliberation and Decision-making Schedule

#### Day 1

- Survey of members
- Thoughts since Weekend 1 (small groups and plenary)
- Recap and report on members' requests (plenary)
- Hearing from witnesses (plenary)
- Witness speed dating (small groups)
- Hopes and fears for devolution (small groups)
- Prioritising powers for a devolved body (small groups and plenary)
- Geographical scope of a devolved body (small groups and plenary)
- Vote on geographical scope

#### Day 2 (varied – north vote order; south – open space)

- Governing structure of a devolved body (small groups and plenary)
- Vote on governing structures
- Discussion of additional issues for voting (small groups and plenary)
- Vote on further issues
- Discussion of proposed Sheffield deal (small groups and plenary)
- Vote on proposed Sheffield deal
- How can we take the message out? (small groups and plenary)
- Reflections on the process (small groups and plenary)
- Survey of members

## C - Selection Phase

### C-1 INITIAL SELECTION EMAIL

"Dear \$InvitationName,

We would like to invite you to take a new survey!

If you cannot view or click on the button above, please copy and paste this link into your browser:

\$SurveyLink

Thank you for being an active member of YouGov!"

Emily Young

YouGov

### C-2 RECRUITMENT AND SURVEY QUESTIONS

The main objective of the quantitative research was to explore the effect of the Citizens' Assembly on the evolution of participants' self-reported attitudes. The main instrument of the quantitative research is a multi-wave survey that tracks the evolution of participants' attitudes overtime and compares them with attitudes of non-participants and

the attitudes of the more general public. To maximize comparability we employed numerous questions drawn from the British Election Study panel (BES) and the newly developed Participedia quality of deliberation survey. Table C21 describes each of the four waves dividing them in 8 modules. Each module is then explored in detail.

TABLE C21: THE SURVEYS IN DETAIL

Module	Wave 0	Wave 1: Entry Weekend 1	Wave 2: Exit Weekend 1	Wave 3: Entry Weekend 2	Wave 4: Exit Weekend 2
Module 1: Selection questions	Included				
Module 2a: Entry Set Weekend 1		Included			
Module 2b: Entry Set Weekend 2				Included	
Module 3: Core (BES)	Included	Included	Included	Included	Included
Module 4: Type of participant & Knowledge (BES)		Included			
Module 5: Voice, Efficacy & Trust (BES)		Included	Included	Included	Included
Module 6: Devolution		Included	Included	Included	Included
Module 7: Quality of Deliberation (PARTICIPEDIA)			Included		Included
Module 8a: Exit Set Weekend 1			Included		
Module 8b: Exit Set Weekend 2					Included
Sample AN	1307	32	32	31	31
Sample AS	1242	23	23	21	21

Wave 0 was administered via email by YouGov during the selection phase, while the other four waves were administered on paper before and after every assembly.

The survey was developed on the basis of the experience accumulated in the Participedia network that specializes in the evaluation of democratic innovation and on the experience of the British Election Study. The questionnaire selection started with a large menu of questions targeted to specific topics and then was refined and adapted to the specifications of the UK pilot and the research objectives. The main objectives were to explore the following research questions:

1. Who participates in this type of democratic innovations when monetary compensation is not offered?
2. What is the impact of participating on participants' attitudes?
  - a. What is the impact of participating on antipolitics?
  - b. What is the impact of participating on external efficacy?
  - c. What is the impact of participating on internal efficacy?
  - d. What is the impact of participating on trust in democracy and institutions?
3. What is the impact of participating on perception of learning?
4. What is the impact of participating on policy preferences with respect devolution?
5. What is the perceived quality of deliberation?

These research questions are fairly standard in the panorama of democratic innovations research, but differently from previous research particular attention was devoted to maximize comparability with the general public and trace evolution over time. The majority of previous studies employed custom built questions that cannot be easily compared with existing surveys. Hence all the questions on participants' type and attitudes were drawn from the British Election Study, while the questions on the quality of deliberation were drawn from the recently developed Participedia questionnaire that is being promoted by a consortium of 26 universities around the world that are the leaders of the study of quality of deliberation and are trying to create a standard impact evaluation framework. The Democracy Matters survey was the first implementation of such questionnaire and it will allow future comparability with all subsequent implementations. The other advantage of reusing questions is the speed at which such questionnaire can be deployed. We started designing the survey in late August 2015, we implemented the first survey in October 2015.

To trace the evolution of attitudes over-time, as table C22 shows, the same batteries of questions were repeatedly asked. This multi-wave design allow us to pinpoint not only the effect of each week-end, but also the effect of the interval in between weekends, and the effect of multiple weekends. This approach allow us to investigate the presence of degradation effects and reinforcing effects something that to our knowledge has rarely been done before.

**TABLE C22: QUESTIONS TO PARTICIPANTS**

**MODULE 1 - SELECTION QUESTIONS ADMINISTERED BY YOUNGOV**

ORIGIN	TOPIC	QUESTION
CUSTOM	INVITATION	From what you have seen or heard, do you know what a citizen's assembly is?
CUSTOM1	INVITATION	A citizens' assembly is where a group of people get together to discuss issues. The people are randomly selected to represent all members of a wider society, for example, the British population. This means the group has the correct balance of men and women, older people and younger people and so on. During an assembly this group of people discuss an issue or issues of importance with one another. For example, they might discuss broad issues such as the economy and NHS or more specific issues such as whether or not Britain should leave or remain a member of the European Union. How interested would you be in attending a citizen's assembly such as the one detailed above?
CUSTOM	INVITATION	In the previous question you stated that you would be interested in attending a citizen's assembly. YouGov is working with both the University of Sheffield and the University of Southampton to organise a citizen's assembly in \$text.raw later this year. Is this something you would like to be involved in?
CUSTOM	INVITATION	The citizen's assembly would involve attending weekend sessions in [location] on <b>both</b> the [dates]. Is this still something you would like to be involved in?
CUSTOM	INVITATION	You stated that you might be interested in attending a citizen's assembly on the [date]. If you are chosen to attend this event, you would be required to attend between 10am and 5pm on <b>both</b> [dates]. Food and two night's hotel accommodation (one night per weekend) would be provided and any travel costs would be compensated for. Is this still something you would like to be involved in?

*Note that there was a follow-up survey that asked those that had answered yes to the previous battery of questions to provide their telephone number. We omit such questionnaire that is available upon request.*

**MODULE 2A: ENTRY QUESTIONS FIRST WEEKEND**

ORIGIN	TOPIC	QUESTION
IRISH CA (ADAPTED)	BRIEFING	How much of the briefing material that you had access to on the website would you say you have read?
IRISH CA (ADAPTED)	BRIEFING	Did you find the briefing material useful?

**MODULE 2B: ENTRY QUESTIONS SECOND WEEKEND <sup>13</sup>**

ORIGIN	TOPIC	QUESTION
BRITISH COLUMBIA CA	RATING	How would you rate the following aspects of the process? <i>(1) The overall process so far (2) The first weekend (3) The online discussion on Facebook (4) The briefing material on the website</i>
CUSTOM	WEB	During the past three weeks did you use the Facebook page for the assembly? <i>(1) Yes, I read some posts (2) Yes, I liked some comments (3) Yes, I wrote some comments (4) Yes, I messaged privately some of the participants (5) No, I did not use the Facebook page (6) Don't know</i>
CUSTOM	WEB	During the past three weeks did you share anything about the assembly on social media (e.g.; Facebook, Twitter, email) with: <i>(1) Family members (2) Friends (3) Colleagues (4) Other members of the assembly [if yes please list their names] (5) Others [please specify]</i>
CUSTOM	ENGAGEMENT	In the past three weeks did you talk in person about the assembly with: <i>(1) Family members (2) Friends (3) Colleagues (4) Other members of the assembly [if yes please list their names] (5) Others [please specify]</i>
CUSTOM	ENGAGEMENT	<i>In the past three weeks did you have any contact with other members of the assembly?</i>
CUSTOM	ENGAGEMENT	<i>If yes which ones?</i>
		How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?
CUSTOM	ENGAGEMENT	<i>My opinion on the topics covered by the assembly has changed in the three weeks period since the first weekend</i>
CUSTOM	ENGAGEMENT	<i>I have paid more attention to news about devolution during the past three weeks</i>
CUSTOM	ENGAGEMENT	<i>I have paid more attention to news about local politics in the past three weeks</i>
CUSTOM	SHOCK	In your opinion what was the most important political event of the past three weeks?
CUSTOM	LEARNING	How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement? I have learned something new about devolution during the past three weeks since the first assembly weekend
CUSTOM	LEARNING	Where did you learn it from? <i>(1) Newspaper/TV/radio (2) Social Media (3) One of the other participants of the assembly (4) The Facebook page of the assembly (5) Briefing papers on the website (5) Personal study (6) Conversation with family, friends, and/or other people (6) Conversation with a politician, please list the name</i>
CUSTOM	CONTACT	Has anyone contacted you to ask questions about the assembly in the past three weeks? <i>(1) No (2) Yes - someone from the media (3) Yes - a friend or a family member (4) Yes - a politician (5) Yes - other, please specify</i>

**MODULE 3: CORE**

ORIGIN	TOPIC	QUESTION
BES	TRUST	How much trust do you have in Members of Parliament in general?
BES	TRUST	How much trust do you have in your local council?
BES	TRUST	How much trust do you have in the MP in your local constituency?
BES	SATISFACTION	On the whole, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way that democracy works in the UK?
BES	ANTIPOLITICS	How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Politicians don't care what people like me think.
CUSTOM	DEVOLUTION	How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Our political system would be improved if more powers were in the hands of local rather than national politicians.
CUSTOM	GOVERNANCE	How much influence should the following have on making recommendations on constitutional issues?
BES	ATTENTION TO POLITICS	How much attention do you generally pay to politics?
CUSTOM	DEVOLUTION	How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement? There should be a level of government that promotes the interests of Southampton, Portsmouth and the surrounding area.
BES	DUTY	How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statement? It is every citizen's duty to vote in an election.

<sup>13</sup> Note the actual layout of the survey is different, this table is simplified to save space

#### MODULE 4: TYPE OF PARTICIPANT & KNOWLEDGE – BRITISH ELECTION STUDY (BES) <sup>14</sup>

ORIGIN	TOPIC	QUESTION
BES	DEFICIT	How necessary do you think it is for the UK Government to eliminate the deficit over the next 3 years - that is close the gap between what the government spends and what it raises in taxes?
BES	ENVIRONMENT	Some believe that protecting the environment should have priority even if that reduces economic growth. Others believe that economic growth should have priority even if that hinders protecting the environment. What is your opinion?
BES	EQUALITY	Some people feel that government should make much greater efforts to make people's incomes equal. Other people feel that government should be much less concerned about how equal people's incomes are. Where would you place yourself on this scale?
BES	TERRORISM	Some people feel that, in order to fight terrorism, we have to accept infringements on privacy and civil liberties. Others feel that privacy and civil liberties are to be protected at all cost. Where would you place yourself on this scale?
BES	PARTY	We have a number of parties in Britain, each of which would like to get your vote.
BES	LEFT/RIGHT	In politics people sometimes talk of left and right. Where would you place yourself on the following scale?
BES	KNOWLEDGE	What is the party of your MP?
BES	KNOWLEDGE	What is the name of your MP?
BES	KNOWLEDGE	Please match the following people to their jobs.
CUSTOM	KNOWLEDGE	Different services are delivered by different levels of government. Can you match these services to the relevant level of government?
BES	ACTIVE IN POLITICS	Thinking now about how active you are in politics and community affairs, during the last 12 months, have you done any of the following?
BES	ACTIVE IN POLITICS	During the last 4 weeks have you personally posted or shared any political content online e.g. through Facebook, Twitter, email or instant messaging?

#### MODULE 5: VOICE, EFFICACY AND TRUST (BES)

ORIGIN	TOPIC	QUESTION
		How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?
BES	EFFICACY	<i>I have a good understanding of the important political issues facing our country.</i>
BES	EFFICACY	<i>People like me don't have any say in what the government does.</i>
BES	EFFICACY	<i>It doesn't matter which political party is in power.</i>
CUSTOM	EFFICACY	<i>I am well enough informed to make recommendations on how the Hampshire and Isle of Wight area is governed.</i>

#### MODULE 6: DEVOLUTION <sup>15</sup>

ORIGIN	TOPIC	QUESTION
CUSTOM	DEVOLUTION	If a new level of government covering larger areas than existing local councils is to be created in your area, which geographical areas should be included?
CUSTOM	DEVOLUTION	Which (if any) of the following powers should a new level of government covering larger areas than existing local councils take over from central government?
CUSTOM	DEVOLUTION	A new level of government covering larger areas than existing local councils should have which of the following structures?

<sup>14</sup> Note the actual layout of the survey is different, this table is simplified to save space

<sup>15</sup> Note the actual layout of the survey is different, this table is simplified to save space



## MODULE 6: DEVOLUTION <sup>15</sup> (continued)

ORIGIN	TOPIC	QUESTION
		How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?
CUSTOM	DEVOLUTION	<i>Our political system would be improved if more powers were in the hands of local rather than national politicians.</i>
CUSTOM	DEVOLUTION	<i>There should be no new level of government created covering larger areas than existing local councils.</i>
CUSTOM	DEVOLUTION	<i>Variation in standards in public services across the country is acceptable.</i>
CUSTOM	DEVOLUTION	<i>If a new level of government covering larger areas than existing local councils is created, then existing councils should be abolished.</i>
CUSTOM	DEVOLUTION	<i>We need even smaller local government areas rather than larger ones.</i>
CUSTOM	DEVOLUTION	<i>Local people should have more of a say in decisions that affect them, for example through referendums or neighbourhood meetings.</i>
CUSTOM	DEVOLUTION	<i>Central government should make the final decision about where new spending on roads, hospitals and housing developments takes place.</i>
CUSTOM	DEVOLUTION	<i>Central government should decide national standards for public services and require local councils to meet those standards everywhere.</i>
CUSTOM	DEVOLUTION	<i>Rather than rely on central government funds, a new level of government covering larger areas than existing local councils should be able to raise taxes or borrow money to invest locally, on issues like roads and public transport schemes, new housing, flood protection, and business development.</i>

## MODULE 7: QUALITY OF DELIBERATION (PARTICIPEDIA)

ORIGIN	TOPIC	QUESTION
		How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?
PARTICIPEDIA	AFFECTEDNESS	<i>Those people whose lives are most impacted by the issues we discussed were well-represented in this assembly.</i>
PARTICIPEDIA	DIVERSITY	<i>The assembly was diverse enough to consider all perspectives</i>
PARTICIPEDIA	INCLUSION	<i>I had ample opportunity in the small group discussions to express my views.</i>
PARTICIPEDIA/ EUROPOLIS	RESPECT	<i>My fellow participants respected what I had to say, even when they didn't agree with me.</i>
PARTICIPEDIA/ EUROPOLIS	TRUTH	<i>Overall, I feel that people expressed what was truly on their mind.</i>
PARTICIPEDIA/ EUROPOLIS	REASONING	<i>Many people expressed strong views without offering reasons.</i>
PARTICIPEDIA/ EUROPOLIS	INCLUSION	<i>We heard a broad range of diverse opinions.</i>
PARTICIPEDIA/ EUROPOLIS	RESPECT	<i>I felt that the other group members listened carefully to what I had to say.</i>
PARTICIPEDIA	CAPACITY	<i>I understood almost everything that other group members said during our discussion.</i>
PARTICIPEDIA	FACILITATOR	<i>The facilitator in my small group is doing a good job in ensuring everyone is able to express their views.</i>
PARTICIPEDIA	FACILITATOR	<i>The facilitator put her/his own views forward about devolution.</i>
PARTICIPEDIA	CHANGE	<i>My views about devolution have changed as a result of this process.</i>
PARTICIPEDIA	CLARIFY	<i>This process has helped me clarify my views about devolution.</i>
CUSTOM	POLITICIAN	<i>The presence of politicians in the small groups helped the other participants better understand the issues</i>
CUSTOM	POLITICIAN	<i>The presence of local politicians in the small groups meant there was too much partisanship in the discussions</i>
CUSTOM	POLITICIAN	<i>It would have been better to have only citizens in the assembly</i>
PARTICIPEDIA	LEARNING	<i>I learned a lot.</i>
PARTICIPEDIA	LEARNING	<i>I had enough information to participate effectively.</i>

## MODULE 7: QUALITY OF DELIBERATION (PARTICIPEDIA) (continued)

ORIGIN	TOPIC	QUESTION
CUSTOM	LEARNING	Please rate the following activities in terms of what was most useful for LEARNING. (1) Plenary lectures by staff (2) Plenary talks by visitors (3) Plenary discussions by the whole assembly (4) Small group breakout sessions on tables (5) Informal conversations with staff (6) Informal conversations with other members
IRISH CA (ADAPTED)	DOMINATION	How much do you agree with the following statements? One or more people in my small group tended to dominate the discussion so that others found it difficult to contribute.
CUSTOM	DOMINATION	Participant lists a name
CUSTOM	INFLUENCE	How much do you agree with the following statements? One or more people in my small group were particularly influential in helping me to think through the issues we were discussing.
CUSTOM	INFLUENCE	Participant lists a name

## MODULE 8A: EXIT FEEDBACK FIRST WEEKEND

ORIGIN	TOPIC	QUESTION
BRITISH COLUMBIA CA	RATING	How would you rate the following aspects of the first weekend? (1) The overall process so far (2) Plenary presentations (3) Plenary discussions (4) Small group discussions (5) Informal conversation (6) Food (7) Your room (8) Meeting space
CUSTOM	FEEDBACK	Please tell us what we can do better

## MODULE 8B: EXIT FEEDBACK SECOND WEEKEND

ORIGIN	TOPIC	QUESTION
CUSTOM	LEGITIMACY	I agree with the assembly final recommendations
CUSTOM	FAIRNES	The way in which the final recommendations of the assembly were made was fair.
CUSTOM	IMPACT	The recommendations that we made are likely to be adopted by those in power.
CUSTOM	FEEDBACK	Would you like to add any additional thoughts about your experience in the assembly over the past few weeks?

## C-3 PHONE CALL PROTOCOL

"Hello. My name is [NAME] and I am calling you from the offices of YouGov. Is now a good time to talk? (It should only take 5 minutes of your time)

[Pause]

In a recent YouGov survey, you confirmed that you are interested and free to attend an upcoming citizens' assembly in [South Yorkshire/Hampshire and the Isle of Wight] and I'm calling to provide you with some more information.

Firstly, I'd like to remind you that this is a completely voluntary project so if you change your mind and think you would rather not be involved (now or after hearing more details) then that's absolutely no problem and it would just be easier for us to know. Likewise, if you can't commit to both the weekends then do say.

Essentially, the aim of this call is to make sure you understand what is going to be involved at these citizens' assemblies. Did you have any questions to begin with?

[Pause]

To give you some background, what we are looking to discuss during

these two weekends is how to make democracy work better. In order to do this we want people like yourself to discuss your thoughts and feelings around democracy in the UK and politics more broadly. So, during the two weekends, you will be hearing from experts, from politicians, and from others with views on these issues. And then we'll be giving you the chance to discuss what you think with other people from [South Yorkshire/Hampshire and the Isle of Wight].

The sessions will run during the day each Saturday from 9 till about 5.30 and on Sundays from 9 till about 3 o'clock. We'll also have activities on Saturday evening, including dinner. And, as you know, we'll be covering all your meals and accommodation for the weekend.

Then, after the two weekends, the research team will put the views and thoughts shared at the sessions to Parliament, the media and online. They will also be published in academic papers. These views will be presented anonymously. So don't worry: if you join us, neither your name, your identity, nor anything you say will be public.

And while there may be politicians and observers there, they won't get in the way of your discussion. We have prepared some documents which expand on what I have just said as well as a FAQ sheet – have you received these by email?

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[Pause]

Again, thank you for considering our request. These citizens' assemblies are vital and will not be possible without people like you.

We will contact you again in the next week to ask you to confirm that you are coming.

We look forward to seeing you there!"

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## D - Supporting Materials

### D-1 – BRIEFING PAPERS

The following briefing papers were produced for the assemblies and are available from the project website.

- Introduction
- Set 1: Local Government Today:
  - The Local Government System in England Today
  - Local Government in the Sheffield City Region
  - Local Government in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight
- Set 2: Reform Options:
  - Devolution Deals
  - Regional Parliaments
  - Local Neighbourhoods
- Set 3 Building Blocks:
  - Policy: which powers are exercised at which level
  - Governance Structures: who exercises these powers (roles of councillors, mayors, ordinary citizens, businesspeople, etc.)
  - Areas/Boundaries: what geographical areas are covered
- Set 4: Criteria for Evaluating the Options:
  - Democracy – representation and accountability
  - Public Services
  - Prosperity
- Set 5: Other
  - Citizen Participation
  - Local Government Funding.

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### D-2 – SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

The following materials were used at different stages throughout the assembly weekends:

- Briefing materials (see D-1)
- Regional Devolution Proposals
- Induction pack
  - Welcome
  - Agenda
  - Logistics - Frequently Asked Questions
  - Ethics consent
  - Media consent
- Surveys (weekend 1 before/after; weekend 2 before/after)
- Weekend Schedules
- PowerPoint presentations
- Witness/Advocate handouts (where appropriate)
- Flowchart of events over 2 weekends
- Small-Group Discussion templates (including key questions)
- Ice-breaker materials
- 'Levels and Responsibility of Government' game materials
- Regional maps (range of options)
- Ballot papers
- Member feedback sheets
- Research assistant note taking protocols
- Research team feedback sheets

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### D-3 – EXPERT WITNESSES

#### Assembly North

*Weekend 1:* Mike Emmerich (ex-Chief Executive of think tank New Economy); John Mothersole (Chief Executive, Sheffield City Council); Arianna Giovannini (Huddersfield University); Cllr Sineod Mair-Richards (Sheffield City Council); Andy Mycock (Huddersfield University); Nigel Slack (community advocate).

*Weekend 2:* Peter Davies (former Doncaster mayor); Sir Steve Houghton (Leader, Barnsley Borough Council and Chair, Sheffield City Region Combined Authority) on the Sheffield City Deal; Dr Tim Moorhead (Sheffield CCG) on NHS and City Deals; Diana Wallis (former MP) on Regional Assemblies.

#### Assembly South

*Weekend 1:* Cllr Stephen Godfrey (Leader, Winchester City Council); Cllr Steven Lugg (Chief Executive of the Hampshire Association of Local Councils); Mike Smith (ex-Director Finance and Executive Director, Southampton City Council); Dr Joannie Willett (University of Exeter).

*Weekend 2:* Mike Emmerich (ex-Chief Executive of the Manchester think tank New Economy); Cllr Roy Perry (Leader, Hampshire County Council and signatory of the HIOW devolution prospectus); Dr Matt Ryan (University of Southampton); Prof. Gerry Stoker (University of Southampton); Willie Sullivan (Director of Electoral Reform Society Scotland).

## D-4 – PARTICIPANT RESEARCH REQUESTS

Between the two weekends of Assembly North, the research team pursued information at the request of assembly members. The

following chart lists these questions and the responses available for the second weekend.

### *What do you need?*

REQUEST	RESPONSE
Feedback from Hampshire Assembly	<b>A team member to present</b> to Assembly North 2.
Presentation from Steve Houghton	<b>Witness 1</b> Sir Stephen Houghton agreed
More MP presentations (esp Conservative MP to explain rationale of changes)	Contacted James Wharton MP. He has promised a written response to the assembly.
Presentation from SYPTE/CCG	<b>Witness 2</b> CCG (NHS): Dr Moorhead agreed
Presentation from leader of LEP or Federation of Small Business	Contacted LEP, no-one available.
Summary of greater north approach to devolution from Dan Jarvis or IPPR Sheffield	A team member has provided additional materials on the website and posted to Facebook.
Examples of devolution in Europe (esp stable government examples)	Unable to achieve this within the time frame.
Constitutional expert on status of arrangements and if powers can be set in stone without constitution	<b>Matt to present</b> to Assembly North 2.
Devolution timeline to now and proposed future	HoC Parliamentary Library provided timeline, included in participant folder.
Other council representatives	<b>Witness 3</b> Former mayor Peter Davies presented

### *What are your questions?*

CONSULTATION
1. <i>Steve Houghton and George Osborne had signed the deal for an elected mayor for South Yorkshire. Where does this leave us?</i>
A: This proposed devolution deal will not be official until the legislation before Westminster is passed and three out of four unitary authorities sign in support. Although additional funding makes majority support likely, there is the possibility that the deal could be stopped.
2. <i>Will they be providing the local electorate with a means of communication prior to signing (such as Facebook, Twitter, or other convenient social points of contact, the decision makers will be able to easily access and assess opinions)?</i>
A: An online consultation process is currently being developed by the Sheffield City Region Combined Authority to span the unitary authorities. However, individual unitary authorities will be engaging in their own consultation processes. This will be operational in November and December 2015, before the unitary authorities vote on the deal in January and February 2016. It is interesting to note that one of the North-East authorities, County Durham, is to hold a referendum on the North-East devolution deal, expected to be Jan/Feb 2016. There is no requirement to do this and it will not be legally binding, but one imagines that they will not proceed if there is a 'no' vote.
3. <i>What impact assessments have been made at this time and what are the plans for impact studies?</i>
A: The Sheffield City Region has commenced impact assessments. These will be made publicly available during the consultation process.
4. <i>How do we encourage engagement with local authority when this deal sends a message that there is no point because the decision is made anyway?</i>
A: No formal decision has been taken. A public consultation period is planned and the proposed deal is not finalised until three out of four authorities sign. If there is a perception that the decision is already made, this speaks to broader questions about political parties and citizen engagement with democracy.
POWERS
1. <i>How will combined authorities ensure they are not blamed for future economic hardships?</i>
A: Some devolution deals have included the statement that 'the region will not be financially worse off as a result of this deal'. This could place onus on central government and reduce potential for blame shifting. Currently, this clause is not in the Sheffield devolution deal.
2. <i>Who can overrule the mayor?</i>
A: The Secretary of State will have reserve powers.  The Combined Authority will be able to amend or where necessary, veto the City Region Mayor's plans, strategies and budgets and all local authorities in the City Region will have a place on the Combined Authority. However, this may be difficult as an elected mayor will have significant popular profile and support.

<p>3. <i>What powers did the South Yorkshire County Council have? Why was it abolished?</i></p> <p>A: The short version - SYCC had powers over Police, Fire, Transport, Economic Development and Strategic Planning. The official reason for abolition was that it was wasteful and an unnecessary tier. Some suggest that the reason was political antagonism on the part of Margaret Thatcher to political authorities that were all Labour controlled that challenged her policies. Following the abolition different areas of the country put in new arrangements to manage some strategic powers. These differ across the country. The introduction of Police and Crime Commissioners altered this in respect of policing powers.</p> <p>A: The long version - SYCC had power over public transport, highways, waste disposal, police, fire, strategic (land-use) planning and economic development, and various ancillary functions like support for the arts, trading standards &amp; consumer protection, museums and galleries. It was abolished in 1986, alongside the other five metropolitan counties (Greater Manchester, Merseyside, West Midlands, West Yorkshire, Tyne &amp; Wear) by the then Conservative Government. This Government believed that there was no need for a strategic level of government in the major cities. The then district councils in areas covered by metropolitan counties [i.e. Sheffield, Rotherham etc.] carried out more functions than district councils elsewhere in England, meaning that the direct responsibilities of metropolitan counties were meagre. This led them to search for a 'strategic role', planning and grant-giving, but this was thin in practice. They were also accused of being overspenders during the tight years of the early 1980s. The major, unadmitted element was political hostility: the met counties and Greater London were Labour-dominated under the Thatcher Conservative governments, and many policy and financial clashes predated the decision to abolish.</p>
<p>4. <i>What if North Yorkshire steams ahead, will Westminster seek to redress the balance?</i></p> <p>A: This is unlikely in the near future as current Government policy emphasises regional variation and competition between regions.</p>
<p>5. <i>What is the impact of English Votes for English Laws on the devolution deal? The more power any regional assembly held, the less influence it would have within Westminster? Would that create difficulties when legislation was passed in Westminster that affected that region?</i></p> <p>A: So far, the limits of power between EVEL and regional devolution have been largely overlooked. When I asked the Sheffield Council team, they responded "Really good question". Some suggest that there will be complexity for Westminster as more powers are devolved to city and other regions, but there is inconsistency in regional influence and arrangements. Others suggest that there may be conflict should regional authorities become strident in their demands and if Westminster tries to pull back control. We don't know.</p> <p>Andy Mycock pointed to imbalances amongst MPs in different parts of England being similar to the 'West Lothian Question'. Andy's "Manchester Withington Question" proposes a situation where the local MP could not vote on services for the constituency of Manchester Withington (which had been devolved to Greater Manchester), but they could vote on them for the rest of England. Such scenarios could challenge the national consistency of EVEL...</p> <p>The House of Commons library responds differently: English Votes for English Laws only applies to matters that are voted on in the House of Commons. It doesn't apply to Government / executive decisions, as – perhaps contrary to what many members of the public believe - these are not taken via votes in Parliament. As all of the powers being devolved are powers that belong to the Government, not to the House of Commons, the 'principle of EVEL' would not lead to any restrictions on MPs' ability to vote in the House of Commons.</p>
<p>6. <i>What limitations will central government place on any such authorities concerning budgeting, policy etc?</i></p> <p>A: We do not have a detailed answer to this question. However, in general the devolution deals are based on an agreement between the Government and the local area as to what needs to be achieved. For instance, Sheffield is to conduct a review of training provision, propose a new system, and then take responsibility for funding it from 2018 – but the devolution deal says this is 'subject to readiness conditions'. It does not seem likely that local areas will be permitted to go off in an entirely different direction from the Government.</p>
<p>7. <i>Will it be a case of central government being in effective control, handing down a manifesto?</i></p> <p>A: This will depend on the outcome of negotiations between central government and the Combined Authority, as well as the continuing and changing relationship between them.</p>
<p>8. <i>Will it be a results based system overall with central government putting restraints on new authorities unless their policies are followed?</i></p> <p>A: This is the most likely outcomes as central government will decide broad policy aims and Combined Authorities will be required to manage delivery within them.</p>
<p>9. <i>Will there be a series of unelected bodies with significant power or control involved in any or most of the process of change, the outline, foundation and make-up of new authorities, then the operation post establishment?</i></p> <p>A: Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) are likely to have plenty of influence on the decisions of the combined authority. LEPs are effectively a focus for business interests. Business would be expected to lobby in its own interests. We do not have any information about whether LEP views will be made transparent.</p> <p>A good deal of what combined authorities are supposed to achieve under devolution deals will be in partnership with other public bodies: the mayor / combined authority will not just be able to tell them all what to do. It will be have a stronger influencing role but this could signify that the combined authority won't be able to move far from what central government wants. The degree of freedom to act available to the mayor / combined authority will certainly be limited by their dependence on unelected bodies, but this is still unknown.</p>

FUNDING	
1. How much income does the city region currently raise in taxes, how much does it receive from other sources and how much additional revenue will it have under the deal?	<p>A: Currently the city region raises no taxes of it's own. It receives grant income from the four constituent councils (Sheffield, Barnsley, Doncaster &amp; Rotherham) for the passenger transport responsibilities and some from HMG directed through the Local Enterprise Partnership. There is also a small component from retained business rates in the regions Enterprise Zone. Additional income under the deal is uncertain.</p> <p>Government money given to Sheffield City Region (eg. for transport or housing) will be given in one budget rather than coming from different Government departments. There will also be greater control over the money Sheffield City Region gets from the European Union.</p>
2. How will the money be distributed (ie. proportionate to the size of the councils in population, area or what)?	<p>A: It will be up to the combined authority how to distribute the funding it receives within its area.</p>
3. How much of this additional revenue will be new money (total and per head) for new projects?	<p>A: The only new money without strings attached being the £30M per year for the next 30 years. Of this only 40% is available for revenue expenditure. This will be a general pot not divided by each council.</p>
4. Is £900m over 30 years across 9 authorities about £3m per year per authority?	<p>A: Not automatically. Funding will go to the mayor and cabinet, who will decide on allocation. They may choose this or another approach. It's possible, but not yet clear, that funding will be movable between years.</p>
5. What transparency will there be about allocation of funding and what guarantees will there be that new money is redirected away from service and to savings/cuts?	<p>A: In the deal and the CA constitution all spending decisions must be made and agreed by the CA meetings/ Mayor. The meetings are public and have space for questions from the public. All are minuted and reports brought to the meeting are normally available online with the agends. It is also intended that, at some point, the meetings will be webcast (available to watch online like youtube). Any use of monies outside of the ringfencing that the government is putting in place (such as supporting services due to be cut) would therefore be spotted and have repercussions.</p> <p>Core local authority funding will continue to be announced in the December before the relevant financial year, as now. So in December 2015, an allocation for each of the four councils in South Yorkshire for 2016-17 will be published. Local authorities are currently planning budgets for future years but will not know the precise amount they will receive from Government until the Comprehensive Spending Assessment next month.</p> <p>The devolution deals also provide some hard figures for allocations of funding, some of which are commitments stretching into future financial years. We do not know how transparent whether future decisions about allocations of funding for devolved powers will be.</p> <p>Re guarantees –we do not know the answer to this at present, but it is very unlikely that the Government would permit this. It is likely that the new money paid to combined authorities will be paid as a 'Section 31 grant'. This is the general power to pay money to local authorities. Section 31 grants can have conditions attached regarding what they are spent on. It seems likely that the Government will oblige combined authorities not to spend the funding on core services. However, this is speculation at present.</p>
6. If services are currently running at a loss, then pooled funding will be in deficit, what new funding would there be for services?	<p>A: There will not be additional funding unless negotiated by the Combined Authority. The most likely result is the Combined Authority needing to source new income streams or make efficiency savings. The devolution deal is not likely to provide new funding for services run by the individual local authorities that are currently short of money. The new funding will be used for investment in items set out in the devolution deal e.g. skills, employment support services, infrastructure investment.</p>
7. Is inflation included in funding agreements to adjust for future costs?	<p>A: Currently it is not.</p>
8. Will CAs be bound by EU directives? Access to EU regional funding?	<p>A: Combined Authorities will be given the legal capacity to direct EU regional payments to specific projects (currently this is controlled by Westminster). However, the EU regions are larger than that of the proposed Combined Authorities, so the specific arrangements are yet to be finalised. EU 'directives' have the status of law and would therefore not be affected by devolution of power.</p> <p>Currently Sheffield (i.e. the area of the four boroughs) receives something of the order of £30m per year in European structural funds. This is its share of the regional allocation (the region in this case being Yorkshire and the Humber). The Government could increase or decrease this figure but any change would have to come from the regional allocation. The combined authority itself will not be able to affect the amount they receive.</p>
9. Do we know the salary the mayor would get and how much his office (and any other staff) would end up costing, and who would be paying him?	<p>A: There is no information about a salary for the mayor. The costs of the Mayor and his administration will be paid for by the CA. The governments Bill allows for a precept (charge on the council tax) to pay for these costs but, so far, I have been assured by Sheffield City Council that there will be no cost to the council tax in this city. The Mayor will have to set a budget each year and have this approved by the CA.</p> <p>Here are some current salaries for comparison.</p> <p>Mayor of Bristol: £65,738; Mayor of Doncaster: £30,000 (previously £73,000); Mayor of Salford: £69,000; Mayor of Middlesbrough: £67,000.</p>

FUTURE	
1. <i>If we take this deal, what if the Sheffield City Region is abolished in 5 years time?</i>	A: This is possible. However, the passage of the Devolution Bill will enshrine the arrangements so powers will not return to central government unless new legislation is passed. The Bill specifically requires consent from a majority of the combined authority councils, and from the mayor if there is one, for the combined authority to be abolished. What is more likely is that the powers will continue but a future administration chooses not to provide funding, making them ineffective.
2. <i>How does this fit with the great northern city?</i>	A: The northern city is one of the key rationales used in support of devolution deals. This has also been addressed by the IPPR and links to information posted on our website/Facebook.
3. <i>Is the deal the end point, or will this shift to a greater Yorkshire model in the future?</i>	A: This deal is unlikely to be the end point. In other countries, where devolved powers are stipulated clearly, there continues to be negotiation over service delivery, funding and accountability. The governance history of the United Kingdom is also one of evolution rather than revolution and there is no reason to think that this will cease with devolution deals. Equally, we do not know whether the boundaries are likely to change in the future.

## D-5 – FACEBOOK GROUP ACTIVITY

Following the first weekend of each assembly participants were invited to join two closed Facebook group to ask question to the experts that had not been answered during the face to face assembly, share news and continue the discussion.

The two closed Facebook group are an innovation of the UK Citizens’ Assembly pilot. They are designed with three main objectives in mind:

1) providing a venue that can continue to engage the participants in the interval of three weeks in between assemblies, 2) providing new information to the participants and 3) promoting horizontal interactions among participants. At the end of the first weekend participants were asked to join the groups because all the questions that had not been answered during the assembly were going to be answered in the groups.

The literature on online communities finds a variety of results depending on the community size and topic, but in general it is very rare that more than 20% of the community produce content. In fact these results have generated the so called 1% rule of content creation that states that in an internet community 1% of the participant creates content, 9% contribute to such content, and 90% reads or lurks.

As we can see from the detailed activity report in the next section the Facebook group of Assembly North had an extraordinary level of participation. Around 89% of its members created content. While the group of assembly South had a good level of participation with around 30% of its members creating content. Interestingly in both groups women participated more than men. Overall it is unclear what

has caused the significant difference in activity levels in two groups of similar size with members that were both recruited via an identical quota-sampling process from the Yougov community. Many factors might have contributed to what we observe.

- 1) In the North the devolution deal had received much more media coverage and was at a more advanced stage of discussion.
- 2) The first weekend in Assembly North had a higher quality of deliberation than the one in the South.
- 3) The presence of politicians in the Facebook groups might have made it more official and might have increased the perceived costs of posting. Staff members in the North posted 24 times more than the one in the South.
- 4) Assembly North Facebook group started one week before assembly South.

Further study is required to unpack which of these and other factors contributed to the differential e-participation rates. What is clear is that under certain circumstances high level of engagement can be achieved even with extremely rudimentary e-participation tools such as Facebook following a citizens’ assembly event.

### ACTIVITY REPORT

The two Facebook group have approximately the same size, the main difference is that the Assembly South group includes politicians.

## FB GROUP MEMBERSHIP

	Assembly North FB group	Assembly South FB group
Citizens participating in the assembly	23	18
Politicians participating in the assembly 4		4
Staff & observers	21	18
Total	44	40

Assembly North had 32 participants, Assembly South had 29, hence the Facebook Group engaged respectively 72% of the members of Assembly North and 76% of members of Assembly South. Assembly

South is composed by 6 politicians and 23 citizens, hence the Facebook group engaged 67% of the politicians and 78% of the citizens.



## FB GROUP CONTENT CREATION

	Assembly North FB group	Assembly South FB group
Citizens' posts	68	22
Politicians' posts		5
Staff & observers' posts	84	55
Ratio Citizens/Staff	76%	49%

The two groups were managed by the same team of facilitators with a similar style of facilitation that was designed to promote as much as possible the self-production of content from the participants and to respond to questions. What is of particular interest is the radical

difference in the level of content creation between the participants in the North and in the South. In the same period of time the participants of Assembly North created 68 posts, while Assembly South only 27.

## INDIVIDUAL LEVEL POSTING

	Assembly North FB group	Assembly South FB group
Average Citizens' posting	2.96	1.23
Median Citizens' posting	2	0
Average Politicians' posting		1.25
Median Politicians' posting		1

In the North there were only 3 inactive citizens, 100% of the 9 women participant posted and 11 out of 14 male members posted (78%). The median citizens' posting in the North was 2. The picture is completely different in the South in which while all politicians at least posted once (100%), many participants did not post at all. In fact the median citizens' posting in the South is zero, while the average is 1.23. Among

women, 30% posted, while among men only 25%. A total of 12 people were inactive. When we look at the number of comments generated by each post we can see that the two assemblies behaved in a similar fashion. On average around 2 comments were generated per participant' post, and around 1 per staff member post.

## COMMENTS GENERATED BY POSTS

	Assembly North FB group	Assembly South FB group
Average comments on citizens' posts	2.6	2.6
Median comments on citizens' posts	2	2
Average comments on politicians' posts		2.6
Median comments on politicians' posts		3
Average comments on Staff's posts	1.8	1.33
Median comments on Staff's posts	0	1

## LIKES GENERATED BY POSTS

	Assembly North FB group	Assembly South FB group
Average likes on citizens' posts	4.4	3.8
Median likes on citizens' posts	4	2.5
Average likes on politicians' posts		4.2
Median likes on politicians' posts		5
Average likes on Staff's posts	3.3	3
Median likes on Staff's posts	2.5	2



When we look at the engagement level of each citizen's post, i.e. the sum of like, comment and share, in the North we see that the average was 9.5, while the median was 9. Staff's post had an average engagement of 6.1 and median of 4. In the South instead citizens' posts

average engagement was 8.13, while the median was 7. Politicians' posts had an average engagement of 8.6, and a median engagement of 11. Posts made by staff had an average engagement of 5.7 and median of 4.5.

#### ENGAGEMENT GENERATED BY POSTS (LIKE+SHARE+COMMENT)

	Assembly North FB group	Assembly South FB group
Average comments on citizens' posts	9.5	8.13
Median comments on citizens' posts	9	7
Average comments on politicians' posts		8.6
Median comments on politicians' posts		11
Average comments on Staff's posts	6.1	5.7
Median comments on Staff's posts	4	4.5

## E - Impact Audit

#### MEDIA HITS LOG FOR DEMOCRACY MATTERS' CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY PROJECT

Date	Outlet	Format	Author	web address
11/09/2015	ERS Blog	Blog	Josiah Mortimer	<a href="http://electoral-reform.org.uk/blog/democracy-matters-why-we%E2%80%99re-launching-our-own-citizens%E2%80%99-assemblies">http://electoral-reform.org.uk/blog/democracy-matters-why-we%E2%80%99re-launching-our-own-citizens%E2%80%99-assemblies</a>
16/09/2015	Sheffield University	Press release	Katie Ghose	<a href="http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/news/nr/citizens-assemblies-parliament-1.506384">http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/news/nr/citizens-assemblies-parliament-1.506384</a>
16/09/2015	Crick Centre	Blog	ERS	<a href="http://www.crickcentre.org/listening-to-the-people-about-britains-constitutional-future/">http://www.crickcentre.org/listening-to-the-people-about-britains-constitutional-future/</a>
16/09/2015	My Science	Feature coverage	Katie Ghose	<a href="http://www.myscience.org.uk/wire/citizens_assemblies_will_debate_britain_s_democratic_future-2015-Sheffield">http://www.myscience.org.uk/wire/citizens_assemblies_will_debate_britain_s_democratic_future-2015-Sheffield</a>
16/09/2015	Local Government Chronicle	Comment (by us)	Katie Ghose	<a href="http://www.lgcplus.com/opinion/our-project-will-bring-citizens-together-to-debate-devolution/5090432.article?blocktitle=Latest-Opinion&amp;contentID=5828">http://www.lgcplus.com/opinion/our-project-will-bring-citizens-together-to-debate-devolution/5090432.article?blocktitle=Latest-Opinion&amp;contentID=5828</a>
16/09/2015	BBC Radio Solent	Interview	Will Jennings	
17/09/2015	ITV Meridian	Interview	Matthew Flinders	
20/09/2015	Disclaimer Mag	Comment	ERS	<a href="http://www.disclaimermag.com/politics/its-time-we-talked-about-compulsory-voting-in-britain-2899">http://www.disclaimermag.com/politics/its-time-we-talked-about-compulsory-voting-in-britain-2899</a>
20/09/2015	Doncaster Free Press	Feature coverage	Matthew Flinders	
23/09/2015	Sheffield University	Blog	Matthew Flinders	<a href="https://www.shef.ac.uk/politics/news/crick-citizens-assemblies-1.510423">https://www.shef.ac.uk/politics/news/crick-citizens-assemblies-1.510423</a>
23/09/2015	OpenDemocracy	Comment	ERS	<a href="https://www.opendemocracy.net/ourkingdom/sarah-birch-matthew-lawrence/time-for-democracy-commission">https://www.opendemocracy.net/ourkingdom/sarah-birch-matthew-lawrence/time-for-democracy-commission</a>
26/09/2015	Equality Lot	Blog	ERS	<a href="https://equalitybylot.wordpress.com/2015/09/25/coming-soon-sortition-in-the-uk/">https://equalitybylot.wordpress.com/2015/09/25/coming-soon-sortition-in-the-uk/</a>
14/10/2015	Blue and Green Tomorrow	Feature coverage	Katie Ghose	<a href="http://blueandgreentomorrow.com/features/citizens-to-be-given-a-say-in-devolution-agenda/">http://blueandgreentomorrow.com/features/citizens-to-be-given-a-say-in-devolution-agenda/</a>
14/10/2015	Economic Voice	Feature coverage	Katie Ghose	<a href="http://www.economicvoice.com/citizens-to-be-given-a-say-in-devolution-agenda/">http://www.economicvoice.com/citizens-to-be-given-a-say-in-devolution-agenda/</a>

Date	Outlet	Format	Author	web address
14/10/2015	Guardian	Live blog	ERS	<a href="http://www.theguardian.com/politics/blog/live/2015/oct/14/pmqs-fiscal-charter-debate-live-debate?CMP=share_btn_tw#block-561e62cee4b0d07453a58fde">http://www.theguardian.com/politics/blog/live/2015/oct/14/pmqs-fiscal-charter-debate-live-debate?CMP=share_btn_tw#block-561e62cee4b0d07453a58fde</a>
15/10/2015	LocalGov.co.uk	Feature coverage	Katie Ghose	<a href="http://www.localgov.co.uk/Two-Citizens-Assemblies-will-explore-future-of-local-government/39625">http://www.localgov.co.uk/Two-Citizens-Assemblies-will-explore-future-of-local-government/39625</a>
15/10/2015	ERS Blog	Blog	Josiah Mortimer	<a href="http://electoral-reform.org.uk/blog/democracy-matters">http://electoral-reform.org.uk/blog/democracy-matters</a>
15/10/2015	UCL	Press release	Katie Ghose	<a href="https://www.ucl.ac.uk/constitution-unit/constitution-unit-news/141015">https://www.ucl.ac.uk/constitution-unit/constitution-unit-news/141015</a>
16/10/2015	Guardian (Public Leaders Network)	Comment (by us)	Katie Ghose	<a href="http://www.theguardian.com/public-leaders-network/2015/oct/16/uk-constitution-power-westminster-holyrood-devolution">http://www.theguardian.com/public-leaders-network/2015/oct/16/uk-constitution-power-westminster-holyrood-devolution</a>
16/10/2015	Huffington Post	Comment (by us)	Josiah Mortimer	<a href="http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/josiah-mortimer/devolution_b_8303726.html">http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/josiah-mortimer/devolution_b_8303726.html</a>
16/10/2015	Democratic Audit	Comment (by us)	Chris	<a href="http://www.democraticaudit.com/?p=16848">http://www.democraticaudit.com/?p=16848</a>
19/10/2015	OpenDemocracy	Comment	Graham Smith	<a href="https://www.opendemocracy.net/uk/graham-smith/experimenting-with-citizens%E2%80%99-assemblies-in-uk">https://www.opendemocracy.net/uk/graham-smith/experimenting-with-citizens%E2%80%99-assemblies-in-uk</a>
20/10/2015	OxPol	Comment	Graham Smith	<a href="http://blog.politics.ox.ac.uk/experimenting-with-citizens-assemblies-in-the-uk/">http://blog.politics.ox.ac.uk/experimenting-with-citizens-assemblies-in-the-uk/</a>
20/10/2015	Radio Solent	Interview	Katie Ghose	
20/10/2015	ERS Blog	Blog	Josiah Mortimer	<a href="http://electoral-reform.org.uk/blog/trusting-ourselves-%E2%80%93-why-we-should-bring-power-closer-home">http://electoral-reform.org.uk/blog/trusting-ourselves-%E2%80%93-why-we-should-bring-power-closer-home</a>
23/11/2015	BBC Radio Solent	News bulletin	Southampton/ ERS	
24/10/2015	Isoton	Blog	Will Jennings	<a href="https://isoton.wordpress.com/2015/10/24/citizens-assembly-to-be-held-in-southampton-this-weekend/">https://isoton.wordpress.com/2015/10/24/citizens-assembly-to-be-held-in-southampton-this-weekend/</a>
25/10/2015	Northumberland Gazette (and lots of other local papers)	Coverage	Katie Ghose	<a href="http://www.northumberlandgazette.co.uk/news/local-news/ne-devolution-deal-mustn-t-be-done-behind-closed-doors-1-7534600">http://www.northumberlandgazette.co.uk/news/local-news/ne-devolution-deal-mustn-t-be-done-behind-closed-doors-1-7534600</a>
26/10/2015	BBC South (online)	Comment	Katie and Will J	<a href="http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-hampshire-34640330">http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-hampshire-34640330</a>
26/10/2015	BBC Radio Solent	Feature coverage	ERS/Soton Uni	<a href="http://mms.tveyes.com/Transcript.asp?StationID=5635&amp;DateTime=10%2F26%2F2015+7%3A02%3A50+AM&amp;LineNumber=&amp;MediaStationID=5635&amp;playclip=True&amp;RefPage=">http://mms.tveyes.com/Transcript.asp?StationID=5635&amp;DateTime=10%2F26%2F2015+7%3A02%3A50+AM&amp;LineNumber=&amp;MediaStationID=5635&amp;playclip=True&amp;RefPage=</a>
31/10/2015	East Devon Watch	Blog	Katie Ghose	<a href="http://eastdevonwatch.org/2015/10/31/devon-somerset-devolution-democratic-deficit-black-hole/">http://eastdevonwatch.org/2015/10/31/devon-somerset-devolution-democratic-deficit-black-hole/</a>
01/11/2015	The Optimistic Patriot	Blog	AN/AS	<a href="http://www.theoptimisticpatriot.co.uk/post/132326912498/citizens-assemblies-are-underway-in-north-and">http://www.theoptimisticpatriot.co.uk/post/132326912498/citizens-assemblies-are-underway-in-north-and</a>
04/11/2015	ERS Blog	Blog	Josiah Mortimer	<a href="http://www.electoral-reform.org.uk/blog/citizens%E2%80%99-assemblies-your-chance-have-say-local-democracy">http://www.electoral-reform.org.uk/blog/citizens%E2%80%99-assemblies-your-chance-have-say-local-democracy</a>
04/11/2015	Sheffield Green Party	Press release	Democracy Matters/ ERS	<a href="http://sheffieldgreenparty.org.uk/2015/11/03/greens-call-for-referendum-on-city-region-mayor/">http://sheffieldgreenparty.org.uk/2015/11/03/greens-call-for-referendum-on-city-region-mayor/</a>
09/11/2015	Constitution Unit	Blog	Alan Renwick	<a href="http://www.ucl.ac.uk/constitution-unit/constitution-unit-news/091115">http://www.ucl.ac.uk/constitution-unit/constitution-unit-news/091115</a>
09/11/2015	Yorkshire Devolution Movement	Blog	Katie/Matthew/ Will	<a href="https://yorkshiredevolutionmovementt.wordpress.com/2015/11/09/devolution-what-the-people-of-yorkshire-really-want/">https://yorkshiredevolutionmovementt.wordpress.com/2015/11/09/devolution-what-the-people-of-yorkshire-really-want/</a>

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09/11/2015	Share Radio	Event round-up	ESRC	<a href="https://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&amp;rct=j&amp;q=&amp;esrc=s&amp;source=web&amp;cd=31&amp;ved=0CBsQFjAAOB5qFQoTCNjuv8znlMkCFco-FAodChlNdw&amp;url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.shareradio.co.uk%2Fflocking-forward%2FPDFBase&amp;usg=AFQjCNGaWRC-CXuwEtcAr8sjpS6F1fCWGA&amp;bvm=bv.107467506,d24&amp;cad=rja">https://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&amp;rct=j&amp;q=&amp;esrc=s&amp;source=web&amp;cd=31&amp;ved=0CBsQFjAAOB5qFQoTCNjuv8znlMkCFco-FAodChlNdw&amp;url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.shareradio.co.uk%2Fflocking-forward%2FPDFBase&amp;usg=AFQjCNGaWRC-CXuwEtcAr8sjpS6F1fCWGA&amp;bvm=bv.107467506,d24&amp;cad=rja</a>
10/11/2015	Sheffield Telegraph	Feature coverage	Matthew Flinders	<a href="http://www.sheffieldtelegraph.co.uk/news/local/sheffield-assembly-calls-for-county-wide-devolution-model-1-7562520#axzz3r5LRUnAC">http://www.sheffieldtelegraph.co.uk/news/local/sheffield-assembly-calls-for-county-wide-devolution-model-1-7562520#axzz3r5LRUnAC</a>
10/11/2015	Sheffield Star	Feature coverage	Matthew Flinders	<a href="http://www.thestar.co.uk/news/sheffield-assembly-calls-for-county-wide-devolution-model-1-7562520">http://www.thestar.co.uk/news/sheffield-assembly-calls-for-county-wide-devolution-model-1-7562520</a>
10/11/2015	Yorkshire Post	Feature coverage	Katie Ghose	<a href="http://www.pressreader.com/uk/yorkshire-post/20151110/281655368958235/TextView">http://www.pressreader.com/uk/yorkshire-post/20151110/281655368958235/TextView</a>
10/11/2015	Local Government Chronicle	Feature coverage	Katie Ghose	<a href="http://www.lgcplus.com/news/local-residents-reject-south-yorkshire-devolution-bid/5091796.article">http://www.lgcplus.com/news/local-residents-reject-south-yorkshire-devolution-bid/5091796.article</a>
10/11/2015	Public Sector Executive	Feature coverage	Katie/Matthew	<a href="http://www.publicsectorexecutive.com/Public-Sector-News/south-yorkshire-opts-for-regional-assembly-over-latest-devolution-model?dorewrite=false">http://www.publicsectorexecutive.com/Public-Sector-News/south-yorkshire-opts-for-regional-assembly-over-latest-devolution-model?dorewrite=false</a>
11/11/2015	Public Sector Executive	Coverage	AN	<a href="http://www.publicsectorexecutive.com/Public-Sector-News/unlike-city-deals-devolution-must-have-accountability-and-scrutiny-pac">http://www.publicsectorexecutive.com/Public-Sector-News/unlike-city-deals-devolution-must-have-accountability-and-scrutiny-pac</a>
11/11/2015	ERS Blog	Blog	Josiah Mortimer	<a href="http://electoral-reform.org.uk/blog/yorkshire-citizens-want-stronger-northern-powerhouse">http://electoral-reform.org.uk/blog/yorkshire-citizens-want-stronger-northern-powerhouse</a>
11/11/2015	Huffington Post	Comment	Josiah Mortimer	<a href="http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/josiah-mortimer/northern-powerhouse_b_8531866.html">http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/josiah-mortimer/northern-powerhouse_b_8531866.html</a>
12/11/2015	Financial Times	Coverage	CA	<a href="http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/e7ddc942-8945-11e5-9f8c-a8d619fa707c.html">http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/e7ddc942-8945-11e5-9f8c-a8d619fa707c.html</a>
12/11/2015	Tchee	Blog	Katie Ghose	<a href="http://www.tchee.co.uk/2015/11/devolution-v-democracy.html">http://www.tchee.co.uk/2015/11/devolution-v-democracy.html</a>
13/11/2015	BBC Radio Sheffield	Interview	Matthew Flinders	
13/11/2015	LabourList	Comment	Citizens Assembly	ERS/CA
14/11/2015	Herald Scotland	Comment	Matthew Flinders	<a href="http://www.heraldscotland.com/opinion/14031590.Will_England_always_be_an_obstacle_to_a_federal_UK_/">http://www.heraldscotland.com/opinion/14031590.Will_England_always_be_an_obstacle_to_a_federal_UK_/</a>
16/11/2015	Big Issue	Feature coverage	Katie/ Matthew	<a href="http://www.bigissuenorth.com/2015/11/call-for-stronger-powers-for-sheffield/15565">http://www.bigissuenorth.com/2015/11/call-for-stronger-powers-for-sheffield/15565</a>
15/11/2015	BBC South	Feature coverage	ERS/Will Jennings	<a href="http://mms.tveyes.com/Transcript.asp?StationID=6235&amp;DateTime=11%2F16%2F2015+7%3A29%3A20+AM&amp;Term=Electoral+Reform+Society&amp;PlayClip=TRUE">http://mms.tveyes.com/Transcript.asp?StationID=6235&amp;DateTime=11%2F16%2F2015+7%3A29%3A20+AM&amp;Term=Electoral+Reform+Society&amp;PlayClip=TRUE</a>
15/11/2015	BBC Solent	Feature coverage	ERS/Will Jennings	<a href="http://mms.tveyes.com/Transcript.asp?StationID=5635&amp;DateTime=11%2F16%2F2015+5%3A03%3A55+AM&amp;Term=Electoral+Reform+Society&amp;PlayClip=TRUE">http://mms.tveyes.com/Transcript.asp?StationID=5635&amp;DateTime=11%2F16%2F2015+5%3A03%3A55+AM&amp;Term=Electoral+Reform+Society&amp;PlayClip=TRUE</a>
15/11/2015	BBC Oxford	Feature coverage	ERS/Will Jennings	<a href="http://mms.tveyes.com/Transcript.asp?StationID=6235&amp;DateTime=11%2F16%2F2015+7%3A29%3A17+AM&amp;LineNumber=&amp;MediaStationID=6235&amp;playclip=True&amp;RefPage=">http://mms.tveyes.com/Transcript.asp?StationID=6235&amp;DateTime=11%2F16%2F2015+7%3A29%3A17+AM&amp;LineNumber=&amp;MediaStationID=6235&amp;playclip=True&amp;RefPage=</a>
16/11/2015	Blue and Green Tomorrow	Feature coverage	Katie/Will/Gerry	<a href="http://blueandgreentomorrow.com/2015/11/16/solent-citizens-debate-plans-for-hampshire-devolution-in-uks-first-citizens-assembly/">http://blueandgreentomorrow.com/2015/11/16/solent-citizens-debate-plans-for-hampshire-devolution-in-uks-first-citizens-assembly/</a>

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16/11/2015	LocalGov.co.uk	Feature coverage	Katie Ghose	<a href="http://www.localgov.co.uk/Solent-citizens-debate-devolution/39844">http://www.localgov.co.uk/Solent-citizens-debate-devolution/39844</a>
16/11/2015	BBC Radio Sheffield	Interview	Matthew Flinders	
17/11/2015	Public Finance	Comment	Katie Ghose	<a href="http://www.publicfinance.co.uk/opinion/2015/11/ministers-must-democratise-devolution-agenda">http://www.publicfinance.co.uk/opinion/2015/11/ministers-must-democratise-devolution-agenda</a>
16/11/2015	LocalGov.co.uk	Feature coverage	Katie Ghose	<a href="http://www.localgov.co.uk/Solent-citizens-debate-devolution/39844">http://www.localgov.co.uk/Solent-citizens-debate-devolution/39844</a>
17/11/2015	Public Finance	Comment (by us)	Katie Ghose	<a href="http://www.publicfinance.co.uk/opinion/2015/11/ministers-must-democratise-devolution-agenda">http://www.publicfinance.co.uk/opinion/2015/11/ministers-must-democratise-devolution-agenda</a>
18/11/2015	Kingstone Labour	Blog	Katie/Matt/Will	<a href="http://kingstonelabour.org/2015/11/18/south-yorkshire-citizens-call-for-stronger-devolution-deal-in-uks-first-ever-citizens-assembly/">http://kingstonelabour.org/2015/11/18/south-yorkshire-citizens-call-for-stronger-devolution-deal-in-uks-first-ever-citizens-assembly/</a>
18/11/2015	MJ	Feature coverage	Katie/CA	<a href="http://www.themj.co.uk/Give-public-a-say-over-dev-deals/202381">http://www.themj.co.uk/Give-public-a-say-over-dev-deals/202381</a>
18/11/2015	Blue and Green Tomorrow	Feature coverage	Katie/CA	<a href="http://blueandgreentomorrow.com/features/electoral-reform-society-calls-on-local-council-leaders-and-government-to-give-the-public-a-say-in-west-midlands-devolution/">http://blueandgreentomorrow.com/features/electoral-reform-society-calls-on-local-council-leaders-and-government-to-give-the-public-a-say-in-west-midlands-devolution/</a>
18/11/2015	MyGreenPod	Feature coverage	CA	<a href="http://www.mygreenpod.com/electoral-reform-society-calls-on-local-council-leaders-and-government-to-give-the-public-a-say-in-west-midlands-devolution/">http://www.mygreenpod.com/electoral-reform-society-calls-on-local-council-leaders-and-government-to-give-the-public-a-say-in-west-midlands-devolution/</a>
18/11/2015	University of Southampton	Press release	Will/Gerry	<a href="http://www.southampton.ac.uk/politics/news/2015/11/11-devolution-debate-in-first-uk-citizens-assembly.page?utm_medium=SocialSignIn&amp;utm_source=Twitter">http://www.southampton.ac.uk/politics/news/2015/11/11-devolution-debate-in-first-uk-citizens-assembly.page?utm_medium=SocialSignIn&amp;utm_source=Twitter</a>
18/11/2015	Crick Centre	Blog	CA	<a href="http://www.crickcentre.org/citizens-assembly-south-debates-devolution/">http://www.crickcentre.org/citizens-assembly-south-debates-devolution/</a>
19/11/2015	Public Sector Executive	Coverage	Katie Ghose	<a href="http://www.publicsectorexecutive.com/News/councils-must-ditch-back-door-devolution-and-give-public-a-say-ers/126703">http://www.publicsectorexecutive.com/News/councils-must-ditch-back-door-devolution-and-give-public-a-say-ers/126703</a>
19/11/2015	Blue and Green Tomorrow	Coverage	CA	<a href="http://blueandgreentomorrow.com/features/english-democrats-respond-to-solent-citizens-assembly-debate-and-proposals/">http://blueandgreentomorrow.com/features/english-democrats-respond-to-solent-citizens-assembly-debate-and-proposals/</a>
19/11/2015	Southern Policy Centre	Coverage	CA	<a href="http://southernpolicycentre.co.uk/2015/11/citizens-assembly-opening-up-devolution-in-the-south/">http://southernpolicycentre.co.uk/2015/11/citizens-assembly-opening-up-devolution-in-the-south/</a>
20/11/2015	ERS Blog	Blog	CA	<a href="http://www.electoral-reform.org.uk/blog/citizens-want-say-devolution">http://www.electoral-reform.org.uk/blog/citizens-want-say-devolution</a>
22/11/2015	BBC Sunday Politics South	Feature coverage	Will Jennings	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/BBCSouthToday/videos/939271809496743/">https://www.facebook.com/BBCSouthToday/videos/939271809496743/</a>
23/11/2015	OpenDemocracy	Comment	Katie Ghose	<a href="https://www.opendemocracy.net/uk/devolution-versus-democracy-report-on-assembly-north">https://www.opendemocracy.net/uk/devolution-versus-democracy-report-on-assembly-north</a>
23/11/2015	Constitution Unit	Blog	Alan Renwick	<a href="http://constitution-unit.com/2015/11/23/do-citizens-assemblies-work-in-practice-eight-lessons-from-a-pilot/">http://constitution-unit.com/2015/11/23/do-citizens-assemblies-work-in-practice-eight-lessons-from-a-pilot/</a>
23/11/2015	BBC Radio Sheffield	Interview	Matthew Flinders	
23/11/2015	LocalGov.co.uk	Comment	Josiah Mortimer	<a href="http://www.localgov.co.uk/Citizens-in-the-Solent-want-a-say-on-devolution/39882">http://www.localgov.co.uk/Citizens-in-the-Solent-want-a-say-on-devolution/39882</a>
24/11/2015	Involve	Blog	CA	<a href="http://www.involve.org.uk/blog/2015/11/24/thoughts-from-the-democracy-matters-citizens-assembly/">http://www.involve.org.uk/blog/2015/11/24/thoughts-from-the-democracy-matters-citizens-assembly/</a>
25/11/2015	Huffington Post	Blog	Josiah Mortimer	<a href="http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/josiah-mortimer/devolution_b_8638224.html">http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/josiah-mortimer/devolution_b_8638224.html</a>

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25/11/2015	March the Fury	Blog	Josiah Mortimer	<a href="https://marchthefury.wordpress.com/2015/11/25/democratising-devolution-how-the-greens-can-lead-the-debate/">https://marchthefury.wordpress.com/2015/11/25/democratising-devolution-how-the-greens-can-lead-the-debate/</a>
26/11/2015	Bright Green	Comment	Josiah Mortimer	<a href="http://bright-green.org/2015/11/26/democratising-devolution-how-the-greens-can-lead-the-debate/">http://bright-green.org/2015/11/26/democratising-devolution-how-the-greens-can-lead-the-debate/</a>
01/12/2015	Local Government Chronicle	Comment	Katie Ghose	<a href="http://www.lgcplus.com/politics-and-policy/governance-and-structure/without-engagement-the-public-will-see-devolution-as-a-stitch-up/7000666.article">http://www.lgcplus.com/politics-and-policy/governance-and-structure/without-engagement-the-public-will-see-devolution-as-a-stitch-up/7000666.article</a>
02/12/2015	BBC Yorkshire (online)	Blog/ comment	Len Tingle/ Matt Flinders	<a href="http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-34982729">http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-34982729</a>
02/12/2015	OpenDemocracy	Comment	Assembly South	<a href="https://www.opendemocracy.net/uk/anna-killick/devolution-in-hampshire-report-on-assembly-south">https://www.opendemocracy.net/uk/anna-killick/devolution-in-hampshire-report-on-assembly-south</a>
15/12/2016	Sortition Foundation	Blog	Democracy Matters	<a href="http://www.sortitionfoundation.org/blog">http://www.sortitionfoundation.org/blog</a>
21/01/2016	Yorkshire First	Press release	Assembly South	<a href="http://www.yorkshirefirst.org.uk/diana_wallis_to">http://www.yorkshirefirst.org.uk/diana_wallis_to</a>
26/01/2016	Blue & Green Tomorrow	Interview	Katie Ghose/ Democracy Matters	<a href="http://blueandgreentomorrow.com/features/exclusive-interview-katie-ghose-ceo-electoral-reform-society/">http://blueandgreentomorrow.com/features/exclusive-interview-katie-ghose-ceo-electoral-reform-society/</a>
28/01/2016	Community Development Alliances Scotland	Blog	Democracy Matters	<a href="http://www.communitydevelopmentalliancescotland.org/policy-and-practice-developments/citizens-assemblies-on-devolution-in-england">http://www.communitydevelopmentalliancescotland.org/policy-and-practice-developments/citizens-assemblies-on-devolution-in-england</a>
03/02/2016	Crick Centre	Blog	Matthew Flinders	<a href="http://www.crickcentre.org/select-committee-citizens-assembly-devolution/">http://www.crickcentre.org/select-committee-citizens-assembly-devolution/</a>
14/02/2016	Red Pepper (print and online)	Comment	Katie Ghose/ Democracy Matters	<a href="http://www.redpepper.org.uk/let-the-people-in/">http://www.redpepper.org.uk/let-the-people-in/</a>
16/02/2016	Fabian Review (print and online)	Comment	Katie Ghose/ Democracy Matters	<a href="http://www.fabians.org.uk/democratising-devolution/">http://www.fabians.org.uk/democratising-devolution/</a>
18/02/2016	Constitution Unit	Blog/comment	Democracy Matters	<a href="https://constitution-unit.com/2016/02/18/a-constitutional-convention-for-the-uk-what-we-can-learn-from-two-pilots/">https://constitution-unit.com/2016/02/18/a-constitutional-convention-for-the-uk-what-we-can-learn-from-two-pilots/</a>

#### PRACTITIONERS' ENDORSEMENTS OF THE DEMOCRACY MATTERS CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY PROJECT

Name	Party / Organisation	Constituency	Role
Graham Allen MP	Labour	Nottingham North	Former Chair of the Political and Constitutional Reform Select Committee
Bernard Jenkin MP	Conservative	Harwich and North Essex	Chair, Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee (PACAC)
Lord David Blunkett	Labour	Brightside and Hillsborough	Former Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, Home Secretary, Secretary of State for Education and Employment
Angela Smith MP	Labour	Penistone and Stocksbridge	Former PPS at DCLG
Harry Harpham MP	Labour	Sheffield Brightside and Hillsborough	Former Deputy Council Leader, Sheffield City Council
Royston Smith MP	Conservative	Southampton Itchen	Former Leader of Southampton City Council
Alan Whitehead MP	Labour	Southampton Test	Former Under Secretary of State in the Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions and former leader of Southampton City Council

Name	Party / Organisation	Constituency	Role
Dominic Grieve MP	Conservative	Beaconsfield	Former Attorney General
Lord Jeremy Purvis	Liberal Democrat	Tweed	Co-Chair, All-Party Parliamentary Group for Reform,
Lord George Foulkes	Labour	Cumnock	Co-Chair, All-Party Parliamentary Group for Reform,
Tristram Hunt MP	Labour	Stoke-on-Trent Central	Former member of the Political and Constitutional Reform Committee
Tommy Sheppard MP	Scottish National Party	Edinburgh East	SNP Spokesperson for the Cabinet Office
Natalie Bennett	Green Party		Leader, Green Party of England and Wales
Leanne Wood	Plaid Cymru	South Wales Central	Leader, Plaid Cymru
Simon Parker	New Local Government Network		Director, NGLN
Jacqui MacKinlay	Centre for Public Scrutiny		Executive Director, CfPS

#### PRACTITIONER PARTICIPATION IN THE DEMOCRACY MATTERS CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY PROJECT

Name	Role
Clr Stephen Godfrey	Leader, Winchester City Council
Clr Steven Lugg	Chief Executive of the Hampshire Association of Local Councils
Mike Smith	ex-Director Finance and Executive Director, Southampton City Council
Dr Joannie Willett	University of Exeter
Mike Emmerich	Director, Metro Dynamics, ex-Chief Executive of the Manchester think tank New Economy
Clr Roy Perry	Leader, Hampshire County Council
Dr Matt Ryan	University of Southampton
Willie Sullivan	Director, Electoral Reform Society Scotland
Clr Sioned-Mair Richards	Sheffield City Council
Nigel Slack	Active citizen
Dr Arianna Giovannini	University of Huddersfield / White Rose Consortium for the North of England
Dr Andrew Mycock	University of Huddersfield
John Mothersole	Chief Executive, Sheffield City Council
Clr Sir Steve Houghton	Leader, Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council
Peter Davies	Former Mayor of Doncaster
Diana Wallis	Former MEP, Yorkshire First

## IMPACT EVENTS SUPPORTING THE DEMOCRACY MATTERS' CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY PROJECT

Date	Event	Details
17/08/2015	Impact event	Roundtable with civil society organisations discussing impact of Citizens' Assemblies with e.g. Citizens Advice, New Citizenship Project, Unlock Democracy, Young Leaders, Quakers
28/08/2015	Meetings with Scottish Government officials	Meetings with Doreen Grove, Ingage, Scottish Government, Local Government and Communities, Elinor Mitchell, lead on Democratic Renewal, and Stephen Gallagher, Deputy Director of Local Government Division to discuss integrating lessons from pilots into Scottish government practice for engagement
16/09/2015	Launch of Citizens' Assemblies	Parliamentary launch of Citizens' Assemblies project sponsored by the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Reform, Decentralisation and Devolution
21/09/2015	Meeting with Jon Trickett	Meeting with Shadow Secretary of State for the Department of Communities and Local Government and for a Constitutional Convention to discuss pilots
05/11/2015	Cabinet Office meeting	Meeting with Cabinet Office to discuss integrating method and findings of Citizens' Assemblies into policy around City Deals
02/12/2015	Meeting with Poleis Ltd.	Meeting to discuss integrating findings of pilots into the design of a constitutional convention with consultants tasked by Labour Party to design such a proposal
17/12/2015	Submission to Parliamentary Inquiry	Submission of Assembly reports to the Department of Communities and Local Government Committee Inquiry into the Cities and Local Government Devolution Bill
13/01/2016	Submission to Parliamentary Inquiry	Katie Ghose and Professor Matthew Flinders to give oral evidence House of Lords Select Committee on the Constitution specifically relating to the pilots
16/01/2016	Launch of Citizens' Assemblies documentary	Launch of documentary at St. George's House that has been produced in collaboration with Common Vision [CoVi]
16/01/2016	Reflection and future planning	Event at Windsor Castle reflecting on the Citizens' Assemblies with practitioners and participants sponsored by St George's House
Jan-16	Submission to Parliamentary Inquiry	Submission of evidence based on the pilots to the inquiry into Better Devolution for the Whole UK by the APPG for Reform, Decentralisation and Devolution in the UK
Feb-16	Southampton Business Meeting	Dissemination of results from Assembly South and discussion of how business interests could best feed into the devolution process.
Mar-16	Conference Fringe Meeting	Fringe meeting on Constitutional Convention at Liberal Democrat Spring Conference with Edward Molloy, Tom Brake MP and Baroness Thornhill
Apr-16	Report Launch	Parliamentary launch of Citizens' Assemblies project report sponsored by the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Reform, Decentralisation and Devolution

