

25/03/21

# Public engagement on infrastructure

Report for the  
Scottish Futures Trust

Ipsos MORI Scotland

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# Executive summary and conclusion

## About the research

In its 2020 report, *A blueprint for Scotland*<sup>1</sup>, the Infrastructure Commission for Scotland produced eight recommendations for achieving Scotland's future infrastructure ambitions. One of these focussed on the role of the public, emphasising that much greater public participation needed to be incorporated as an integral part of infrastructure investment decision making.

Since the Commission's recommendations, the Scottish Government published the Infrastructure Investment Plan (IIP)<sup>2</sup>, setting out a vision for future infrastructure and approach to delivering the National Infrastructure Mission. As part of the future road map for infrastructure investment decision, the IIP sets out a plan to research options for the best approach to public engagement in infrastructure, with the aim of delivering a new public engagement approach as a result.

Against this background, the Scottish Futures Trust commissioned Ipsos MORI to carry out research into the range of public engagement approaches on infrastructure, to help understand what would work best in particular situations.

## Methodology

The research was delivered by Ipsos MORI between October 2020 and February 2021. It consisted of two strands:

- Strand one – a desk-based review of relevant literature, policy documents, and websites which provided examples of public engagement frameworks, key principles, and research involving public engagement in practice.
- Strand two – workshops with members of the public to gauge their views on what future public engagement on infrastructure should look like, including by asking for their views on examples of previous engagement approaches.

## Key findings

### Strand one

The evidence review found that there is no single, or 'best', approach to public engagement on infrastructure. Choosing the most appropriate method to use is just one of the considerations involved in planning an engagement project, albeit a vital one. A number of factors will be important to bear in mind including:

- the overall aims and objectives of the engagement,
- the level of desired engagement, and whether the purpose is to inform, consult, involve, collaborate with or empower the people that are being engaged,
- the characteristics of the population of interest,
- the types of information or decisions that are sought from the public, and
- the resource and timescale available.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://infrastructurecommission.scot/page/key-findings-report>

<sup>2</sup> [A National Mission with Local Impact: Infrastructure Investment Plan for Scotland 2021-22 to 2025-26 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-infrastructure-mission-with-local-impact/infrastructure-investment-plan-for-scotland-2021-22-to-2025-26/pages/infrastructure-investment-plan-for-scotland-2021-22-to-2025-26.aspx)

- practical considerations, including facilitation, number of participants, the role of experts and use of incentives.

The review identified a wide range of methods that have been used to engage the public on infrastructure in the past, including:

- citizens' assemblies
- citizens' juries
- deliberative workshops and public dialogues
- focus groups
- open consultations
- targeted engagement with specific groups, and
- online consultations.

The use of these methods, in part, depends on the purpose of the engagement and there are strengths and weaknesses of each approach depending on the context. What was less clear from the review was how participants themselves feel about their involvement – in other words how effective they feel these methods are as a means of engaging and letting their voices be heard. Strand two therefore provided the opportunity to explore the pros and cons of different engagement methods with members of the public.

## Strand two

Workshop participants recognised the potential value of public engagement and its role in helping to shape decisions on infrastructure. However, it was clear they were sceptical about the way public engagement on infrastructure had been carried out in the past. Previous experiences had left participants feeling that public engagement did not happen enough, and when it did it was either tokenistic or did not lead to real change.

For public engagement to work well, participants felt it needed to meet their criteria of being:

- Visible and accessible
- Representative
- Inclusive
- Clear and transparent
- Impartial
- Targeted
- Impactful
- Shared with the public.

These principles echoed those identified in the literature as existing standards or examples of best practice in public engagement. In spite of COVID-19 changing the way the public are engaged with, it seems that principles of good public engagement are therefore largely unchanged from those identified pre-pandemic. This emphasises the importance of future public engagement being carried out with those principles in mind.

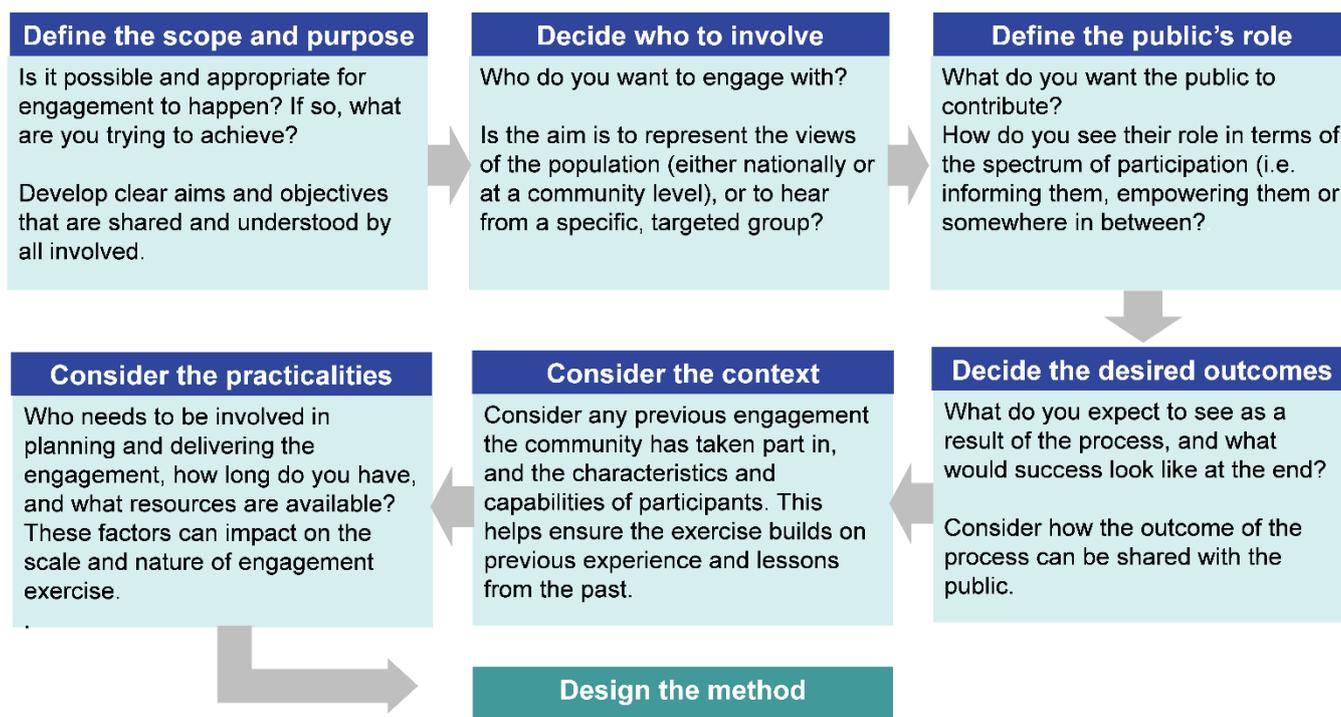
In terms of the best methods to use, participants echoed the finding of the evidence review in strand one: there was no one method seen as the most effective way of engaging the public on infrastructure. Their preference was for a mix of methods to appeal to as broad a range of people as possible, or for the method to be chosen in response to the purpose of the engagement and the audience being engaged with.

## Conclusion

The research made clear that a range of potential engagement approaches can, and have, been used on the topic of infrastructure. Though no single method emerged as the preferred approach overall, the research has shown that certain methods work better in particular circumstances than others.

Before choosing the most appropriate approach to public engagement, a number of factors will be important to bear in mind and a number of stages should be followed:

### Key stages to consider when planning public engagement



Regardless of method, a strong theme that emerged from the workshops was a desire for engagement to be carried out at a “grass roots” level, involving the members of communities that will be ultimately be impacted by any decisions taken as a result.

Another strong message from the workshops was the need for the outcomes of public engagement to be shared with those who participated and for those findings to be acted. Too often, it was felt, the public are left unaware of how their input has been used and what outcomes it has helped achieve.

It is also worth highlighting that workshop participants, though familiar with the term infrastructure, were not aware of the full range of categories covered by the Scottish Government’s definition. They associated the term with transport, roads, housing, energy, water, schools and healthcare facilities. However, other aspects were less well recognised, including telecommunications and internet, emergency services, waste management and flood prevention. When engaging with the public on infrastructure, therefore, there may need to be some awareness-raising of the full breadth of categories that it includes.

# Introduction

This report relates to research carried out by Ipsos MORI on behalf of the Scottish Futures Trust to explore approaches to engaging the public on infrastructure.

## Background

In its 2020 report, *A blueprint for Scotland*<sup>3</sup>, the Infrastructure Commission for Scotland produced eight recommendations for achieving Scotland's future infrastructure ambitions. One of these focussed on the role of the public, emphasising that much greater public participation needed to be incorporated as an integral part of infrastructure investment decision making. It stated:

*By 2022, the capacity and capability requirements for an informed approach to public engagement and participation needs to be clearly established and implemented by the Scottish Government, to ensure that short and long term outcomes are effectively debated, understood and taken into consideration.*

Since the Commission's recommendations, the Scottish Government published the Infrastructure Investment Plan (IIP)<sup>4</sup>, setting out a vision for future infrastructure and approach to delivering the National Infrastructure Mission. Following on from the Infrastructure Commission for Scotland recommendations, the IIP states that the Scottish Government will build on learning across sectors, including Scotland's Climate Assembly, and other countries, to develop an exemplar public engagement approach. As part of the future road map for infrastructure investment decision, the IIP sets out a plan to research options for the best approach to public engagement in infrastructure, with the aim of delivering a new public engagement approach as a result.

Against this background, the Scottish Futures Trust commissioned Ipsos MORI to carry out research into the range of public engagement approaches on infrastructure, to help understand what would work best in particular situations.

## Method

The research consisted of two stages.

1. The first was a desk-based review of relevant literature, policy documents, and websites which provided examples of public engagement frameworks, key principles, and research involving public engagement in practice.
2. The second involved workshops with members of the public to gauge their views on what future public engagement on infrastructure should look like, including by asking for their views on examples of previous engagement approaches.

### Desk-based evidence review

It total around 35 relevant documents were found to include in the review. These can be broadly grouped into three categories: examples of public engagement on the topic of infrastructure; examples of public engagement on topics that have relevance to discussions on infrastructure (such as those related to climate change); and research that provides guidance on or evaluates the effectiveness of public engagement generally.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://infrastructurecommission.scot/page/key-findings-report>

<sup>4</sup> [A National Mission with Local Impact: Infrastructure Investment Plan for Scotland 2021-22 to 2025-26 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)

## Workshops

The second involved workshops with members of the public to gauge their views on what future public engagement on infrastructure should look like, including by asking for their views on examples of previous engagement approaches.

As the research was carried out during COVID-19 and associated lockdown restrictions, the workshops were carried out by video, using Zoom, rather than face-to-face. Workshops lasted 2.5 hours. The workshops were broadly split by the following locations, to help ensure a mix of both urban and rural perspectives:

- **Edinburgh** (27<sup>th</sup> January). 16 participants, all from Edinburgh and classed as being in a large urban<sup>5</sup> area.
- **Glasgow** (16<sup>th</sup> February). 15 participants, all from Glasgow and classed as being in a large urban<sup>6</sup> area.
- **North of Scotland** (2<sup>nd</sup> February). 15 participants. This covered Highland, Na h-Eileanan an Iar, Aberdeenshire, Aberdeen City, and Moray. The group had a mix of rural (remote, very remote and accessible rural) and urban (large urban, accessible small town, other urban).
- **South West of Scotland** (3<sup>rd</sup> February). 10 participants. This covered Dumfries and Galloway, Argyll and Bute, North Ayrshire, East Ayrshire, South Ayrshire and South Lanarkshire. This group also had a mix of rural (remote, very remote and accessible rural) and urban (large urban, accessible small town, other urban).

Participants were recruited by telephone from a list of people who had taken part in Ipsos MORI's Scottish Opinion Monitor survey in November 2020 and had agreed to be re-contacted for research purposes. Demographic quotas were set to ensure a representative in terms of gender, age, social grade, working status and disability.

Participants received £50 as a thank you for their participation.

## Interpretation of qualitative data

The workshops were a form of qualitative research. Qualitative research aims to identify and explore the different issues and themes relating to the subject being researched. The assumption is that issues and themes affecting participants are a reflection of issues and themes in the wider population concerned. Although the extent to which they apply to the wider population, or specific sub-groups, cannot be quantified, the value of qualitative research is in identifying the range of different issues involved and the way in which these impact on people.

<sup>5</sup> Urban and rural categories are based on the Scottish Government RESAS six-fold classifications <https://www.gov.scot/publications/understanding-scottish-rural-economy/pages/13/>

<sup>6</sup> Urban and rural categories are based on the Scottish Government RESAS six-fold classifications <https://www.gov.scot/publications/understanding-scottish-rural-economy/pages/13/>

# Strand one: findings from evidence review

This chapter presents the findings of the desk research. It describes existing models and frameworks for public engagement, before considering different methods of engagement, some practical considerations involved in planning an engagement approach, and highlighting some examples of best practice.

## Public engagement principles

Recent years have seen the emergence of a number of frameworks and models aimed at guiding and promoting good practice in public engagement. These range from key question sets or considerations that may be helpful in establishing the parameters of an engagement exercise, to more detailed practical guidance covering all stages of the process.

These include Involve's nine stages for planning public engagement activities<sup>77</sup>; which aim to help organisations establish whether engagement is appropriate and feasible; and, if so, to make early decisions around design, implementation and analysis. These nine stages are the following:

1. Defining the scope of the engagement
2. Defining the purpose
3. Deciding who to involve
4. Deciding what the outputs will be
5. Deciding what outcomes you expect
6. Considering the context
7. Final design of the process (including method, duration, numbers etc)
8. Planning the institutional response to the participation process
9. Building in review of the process from an early stage

Another particularly influential example of a public engagement framework is the Sciencewise principles<sup>8</sup> for best practice in public dialogue. The Sciencewise programme is managed and funded by the UK government's Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, and provides assistance to policy makers to carry out public dialogue, to inform their decision-making on science and technology issues. The Sciencewise principles are based on theoretical understandings and practical experience, and cover five key dimensions of engagement:

- *Context*: the conditions leading to the dialogue process are conducive to the best outcomes
- *Scope*: the range of issues and policy opinions covered in the dialogue reflects the participants' interests
- *Delivery*: the dialogue process itself represents best practice in design and execution
- *Impact*: the dialogue can deliver the desired outcomes
- *Evaluation*: the process is shown to be robust and contributes to learning

<sup>77</sup> Involve (2005) How to put people at the heart of decision making, at <https://www.involve.org.uk/sites/default/files/field/attachemnt/People-and-Participation.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Sciencewise (2019) The Government's approach to public dialogue on science and technology, at <https://sciencewise.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Guiding-Principles.pdf>

Further principles of effective engagement are outlined in the National Standards for Community Engagement.<sup>9</sup> Introduced in 2005 and updated during 2015/16, the Standards comprise good-practice principles designed to support and inform the process of community engagement and improve what happens as a result. There are seven Standards: **Inclusion, Support, Planning, Working together, Methods, Communication, and Impact**. They have been recommended by Audit Scotland<sup>10</sup> as good practice and were adopted by Transport Scotland in its multi-strand engagement programme for the Queensferry Crossing (which is cited as an example of good practice in the Infrastructure Investment Plan).

In addition to these overarching principles relating to any public engagement, previous research has provided guidance on engagement with the public on infrastructure specifically. Ipsos MORI's publication *We need to talk about infrastructure (but how?)*<sup>11</sup> draws on learnings from a range of infrastructure research projects and identifies five main learning points that cut across infrastructure conversations – whether engaging with communities affected by construction or more generally with taxpayers and stakeholders, or running targeted communications campaigns. The five learning points in the report are summarised below:

1. *Make it meaningful for people.* Infrastructure matters to people, but the terminology can be so vague or laden with jargon that it becomes meaningless to people. There is a need to make infrastructure tangible, making clear its benefits, impacts and legacy.
2. *Make the case for the new.* People's natural inclination is towards a cautious, pragmatic approach that favours improving what already exists. Therefore, the case for new infrastructure projects can require careful framing with the public.
3. *Define (and reflect) your audience.* Important questions to consider here are: Whom do you want to listen to? And speak to? When and how? Defining the target audience for engagement is central to having the right conversation about infrastructure.
4. *Listen and lead.* Good engagement should be based on an understanding of cultural and local relevance, appealing to people emotionally as well as rationally.
5. *Consider the message and the messenger.* People tend to be wary of hearing from people with vested interests, but value the role of central and local government in setting strategic priorities, and of neutral experts in developing the ideas to deliver.

It is clear from previous research that effective public engagement, both generally and in relation to infrastructure, specifically, requires a number of factors to be considered. The method of public engagement is just one of those factors, albeit a vital one. The various considerations outlined above can be summarised as involving three key elements: purpose, context and process<sup>12</sup>:

<sup>9</sup> The National Standards for Community Engagement, at <https://www.scdc.org.uk/what/national-standards>

<sup>10</sup> Strategic Scrutiny Group (2019), Principles for community empowerment, at [https://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/uploads/docs/report/2019/briefing\\_190725\\_community\\_empowerment.pdf](https://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/uploads/docs/report/2019/briefing_190725_community_empowerment.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> Ipsos MORI (2019), We need to talk about infrastructure (but how?), at <https://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/we-need-talk-about-infrastructure-how-0>

<sup>12</sup> As summarised in Involve (2005) How to put people at the heart of decision making, at <https://www.involve.org.uk/sites/default/files/field/attachemnt/People-and-Participation.pdf>

### ***Purpose + Context + Process = Outcome***

- **Purpose:** be clear on what the engagement activity aims to achieve; ideally the purpose will be explicitly agreed among all participants.
- **Context:** understand the context for the engagement, including the issues, people, history, location, structures of organisations and institutions taking part, and wider decision-making processes.
- **Process:** the design (or method) is about deciding how the purpose should be achieved; it should always follow consideration of the purpose and context.

With these principles in mind, the following section outlines and assesses some of the methods used recently to engage the public on infrastructure.

### **Levels of public engagement**

Public engagement can be conducted in a range of ways. Rowe and Frewer (as cited in Aitken, Davidson et al, 2013)<sup>13</sup> argue that although there is an international trend towards increased public involvement in policy areas, this is understood as meaning a variety of different things and in turn is used to describe a variety of different approaches and projects. This, and other previous studies on this topic, have found that methods of public engagement used typically reflect the objectives or purpose of the exercise; therefore, public engagement can take many different forms in serving many different purposes.

The International Association of Public Participation cites that public engagement typically falls somewhere within a spectrum (which it titles the Spectrum of Public Participation) which ranges from 'inform' up to 'empower'.<sup>14</sup> On the Spectrum, the level of public participation and involvement increases through the levels, up to 'empower' where decision-making powers are placed in the hands of the public. The five levels of the Spectrum are highlighted below in Figure 1.

<sup>13</sup> Aitken (2013) 'Literature Review: Empowering Citizens in Decision Making', in Davidson, S et al, (2013), Public Acceptability of Data Sharing Between the Public, Private and Third Sectors for Research Purposes at <https://www2.gov.scot/resource/0043/00435458.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> At <https://www.iap2.org/page/pillarsn/>

**Figure 1: Public engagement in five broad levels: The Spectrum of Public Participation<sup>15</sup>**



	<b>Inform</b>	<b>Consult</b>	<b>Involve</b>	<b>Collaborate</b>	<b>Empower</b>
<b>Public engagement goal</b>	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution	To place final decision making in the hands of the public
<b>Promise to the public</b>	We will keep you informed	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision	We will work with you to ensure your concerns are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible	We will implement what you decide

This Spectrum of Public Participation can help determine the public’s role in the decision-making process, depending on each individual situation and requirements. The research does not indicate that one part of the spectrum is the ‘best’ or ‘correct’ approach, but rather that they each have different purposes and outcomes.

<sup>15</sup> Recreated from the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation at <https://organizingengagement.org/models/spectrum-of-public-participation/>

That said, the Green Alliance argues that public engagement on decisions about new infrastructure have too often been dominated by use of the ‘consult’ approach which, it suggests, can limit the opportunity for the public to influence the decision. It argues for wider use of different levels of engagement, stating that *the key to successful engagement is applying the appropriate kind of participation in a given situation*.<sup>16</sup>

The public engagement methods identified in this review represent a range of approaches and arguably sit at different points on this Spectrum. Rather than aiming to identify which level on the Spectrum is the ‘best’, or indeed which specific method of engagement is the ‘best’, the research highlights the ways in which methods have been applied in the past and the pros and cons of these approaches to engaging the public on infrastructure.

## Methods commonly used in infrastructure public engagement

The evidence review identified a wide range of methods that have been successfully used for infrastructure public engagement. These methods can be grouped into the following five categories:

- 1. Deliberative engagement.** Most of the approaches identified in the review (specifically citizens’ assemblies, citizens’ juries, workshops and dialogues) were deliberative in nature. Deliberation is an approach to decision-making that allows participants to consider relevant information, discuss the issues and options and develop their thinking together before coming to a view<sup>17</sup>. Deliberative public engagement therefore differs from some other forms of engagement in that it gives participants time to consider and discuss an issue in depth before they come to a considered view. When exploring the strengths and weaknesses of various approaches, the role of deliberation is therefore relevant to a number of the methods reviewed.

Deliberative engagement can sit on different parts of the Spectrum of Public Participation (Figure 1.1), depending on its aim and format. However, this method most typically involves ‘consult’ ‘involve’, or ‘empower’ levels of engagement.

- 2. Open consultations.** Many of the approaches used to engage the public on infrastructure took the form of open consultations. These consist of either public meetings, forums or online consultations, with the common factor being that they are ‘open invitation’, meaning any member of the community can attend/contribute their ideas. There are numerous examples and methods of open consultations being held by local authorities to consult communities on planned or proposed developments in their area, such as windfarms (e.g. in Moray West, Orkney and Shetland), transport projects (e.g. Edinburgh trams) or city centre regeneration (e.g. George Square Development in Glasgow). They also form part of wider national engagement programmes such as the National Transport Strategy, which used a range of approaches to gather views including an online survey which was open to anyone who chose to participate.

The level of engagement involved in open consultations is typically either ‘inform’ or ‘consult’, but other levels may also be involved depending on the nature of the open consultation.

<sup>16</sup> The Green Alliance (2015) Opening up infrastructure planning: the need for better public engagement, at [https://www.green-alliance.org.uk/resources/Infrastructure\\_planning.pdf](https://www.green-alliance.org.uk/resources/Infrastructure_planning.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> Adapted from the Deliberative Democracy Consortium as cited in [https://www.involve.org.uk/sites/default/files/uploads/Deliberative-public-engagement-nine-principles\\_0.pdf](https://www.involve.org.uk/sites/default/files/uploads/Deliberative-public-engagement-nine-principles_0.pdf)

**3. Targeted engagement with specific groups.** As well as approaches that aim to represent a broad sample of the public, the research has also identified public engagement delivered with specific groups. This includes targeted workshops for the Big Climate Conversation<sup>18</sup> designed to encourage participation from young people and from people with limited prior engagement in conversations about climate change. Another example was the piloting of the Place Standard in Hillhead and Harestanes,<sup>19</sup> where East Dunbartonshire Council, Keep Scotland Beautiful and NHS Health Scotland engaged with children and young people by working through schools and community groups - including those supporting LGBT youth and young adults with additional support needs.

Targeted engagement with specific groups can take several forms and can therefore sit at any of the levels in the Spectrum.

**4. Design-led approach e.g. Charrettes.** Often using a combination of open and targeted engagement, design-thinking is often used to support synthesis of issues, imagine future possibilities and test scenarios. An example of a design-led approach, a charrette is traditionally a workshop that brings together people from different disciplines (e.g. architecture, planning, engineering, local government) along with members of the public to create a design and plan for a specific area<sup>20</sup>. They are distinct from other forms of group discussion in that they are design-based and are therefore typically used in community redevelopment or regeneration projects. A variety of methods can support engagement aims, including visualisation technology<sup>21</sup>, scenario planning<sup>22</sup> and modelling<sup>23</sup>. For example, a series of charrettes were carried out as part of Scottish Canals' redevelopment of Bowling Harbour and of the Woodside, Firhill and Hamiltonhill in Glasgow.<sup>24</sup> Charrettes have often used a mix of open public consultation, with targeted input from specialists. A design-led approach can however utilise other methodologies, with increased levels of engagement. A design-led approach could therefore be 'consult', 'involve', or 'collaborate' depending on their purpose.

**5. Online engagement<sup>25</sup>.** Participants' views are gathered via online platforms, websites, email or social media. Online engagement can either be used as a standalone engagement approach or delivered as part of a mixed method project alongside offline, face-to-face engagement. One approach used by Ipsos MORI on a recent project on the future of cities for Innovate UK, was an online community which allowed participants to engage with each other (as they would in a social media platform) and respond to questions posed by a moderator. In its research into future investment plans, Scottish Water used a range of approaches including 'digital immersion' whereby participants responded to a range of online tasks over the course of a week.

<sup>18</sup> The Scottish Government (2020) The Big Climate Conversation: report of findings, at <https://www.gov.scot/publications/report-findings-big-climate-conversation/>

<sup>19</sup> Keep Scotland Beautiful (2017) Piloting the Place Standard in Hillhead and Harestanes, at <https://www.keepsotlandbeautiful.org/media/1560091/ksb-place-standard-report-final-31-05-17.pdf>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.involve.org.uk/resources/methods/design-charrettes>

<sup>21</sup> Visualisation technology: Virtual Landscape Theatre | The James Hutton Institute

<sup>22</sup> Scenario planning: (PDF) Scenario Planning for the Edinburgh City Region (researchgate.net) and ADS / SNH report on sustainable placemaking – A&DS

<sup>23</sup> Modelling: Horizon scanning | Transforming Planning

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.scottishcanals.co.uk/placemaking/north-glasgow/woodside-firhill-hamiltonhill-charrette/>

<sup>25</sup> Note, online engagement here refers does not include the use of online tools such as video platforms as a means of conducting workshops, focus groups, and other qualitative research techniques – as these are already covered under the deliberative engagement category.

Online engagement can also take several forms and can therefore sit at any of the levels on the Spectrum.

Examples of the individual methods identified in the review are outlined in Table 1, including their typical purpose, characteristics, and pros and cons. Definitions of these techniques are derived from Involve.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> <https://www.involve.org.uk/resources/methods>

**Table 1: Public engagement methods use on/related to infrastructure**

Citizens assemblies			
<p><b>What are they?</b></p> <p>A citizens' assembly involves bringing together a fairly large group of citizens, selected to be broadly representative of the demographics of an area, to deliberate on an issue.</p> <p>A central feature is the learning component, helping participants to develop an understanding of the issue based on unbiased information. Information is usually presented through a combination of presentations from experts, written information and facilitated discussions.</p> <p>Best suited to examining broad policy objectives, assessing policy options to develop recommendations, and gaining insights from the public about existing practice.</p> <p><b>Strengths:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High profile, can draw attention to an issue</li> <li>• Large number of participants, representative of population</li> <li>• Bring out diverse perspectives on complex issues</li> <li>• Brings decision makers face-to-face with citizens</li> <li>• Learning phase helps participants understand, change and develop opinions on an issue</li> </ul> <p><b>Weaknesses:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expensive, time/resource intensive</li> <li>• Requires a high level of expertise to plan and execute</li> </ul>	<p><b>How do they work?</b></p> <p><b>Length of process:</b> Across several weekends</p> <p><b>Number of participants:</b> 50-250</p>	<p><b>Examples:</b></p> <p>Citizens' assemblies have been used to tackle complex issues such as climate change, constitutional reform, and a future vision for Scotland.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scotland's Climate Assembly (for the Scottish Government)</li> <li>• The Citizens' Assembly of Scotland (for the Scottish Government)</li> <li>• Ireland's Citizens' Assembly (for the Oireachtas, the legislature of Ireland)</li> <li>• Citizens' Assembly on congestion, air quality and public transport for the Greater Cambridge Partnership</li> <li>• Other Citizens' Assemblies for local authorities including Oxford City Council, Camden Council and Brighton &amp; Hove Council</li> </ul>	<p><b>Typical level of public engagement</b> (on the Spectrum of Public Participation)</p> <p>'Involve', 'Collaborate' or 'Empower'</p>

Citizens' juries			
<p><b>What are they?</b></p> <p>Similar to a judicial jury, a citizens' jury brings a small representative group of citizens together to hear evidence, deliberate among themselves and reach a conclusion.</p> <p>Distinguishing feature of any citizens' jury is that the topic was framed around a single question on which jurors were asked to reach a conclusion.</p> <p>Effective when asking the public about questions where there may be different perspectives in previous research or different positions taken by experts.</p> <p><b>Strengths:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highly focussed, so can help establish views on very specific policy-related questions</li> <li>• Learning phase including use of expert witnesses can help to engage public on very complex topics</li> <li>• Provide clear outputs linked back to specified objectives</li> <li>• In-depth deliberation leads to rich and nuanced evidence</li> </ul> <p><b>Weaknesses:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small number of participants and shorter timescale than a citizens' assembly, therefore less scope to tackle wide-reaching topics in detail</li> <li>• Requires a very clear question or output specified from the beginning</li> <li>• Requires careful selection of experts to present to the jury</li> </ul>	<p><b>How do they work?</b></p> <p><b>Length of process:</b> Across several weekends (2-7 days)</p> <p><b>Number of participants:</b> 12-24</p>	<p><b>Examples:</b></p> <p>Citizens' juries have been used to tackle fairly detailed topics: the role of regulation and incentives for home energy efficiency; carbon capture and storage; and climate change.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A citizens' jury on consumer participation in energy policy in Scotland (Citizens Advice Scotland)</li> <li>• Citizens' juries to test views on carbon capture and storage in Scotland (University of Cambridge)</li> <li>• Citizens' juries on climate change in Leeds (Leeds Climate Commission), Lancaster (Lancaster City Council), Cardiff and Penrith (Green Alliance)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Typical level of public engagement</b> (on the Spectrum of Public Participation)</p> <p>'Involve', or 'Collaborate'</p>

Deliberative workshops and public dialogues			
<p><b>What are they?</b></p> <p>These are facilitated group discussions that provide participants with the opportunity to consider an issue in depth, challenge each other's opinions and develop their views/arguments to reach an informed position. They involve a learning phase, similar to citizens' assemblies or citizens' juries.</p> <p>Workshops are suited to a range of topics and contexts.</p> <p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fairly flexible approach, which can be either exploratory or very focussed in nature</li> <li>Learning phase and deliberation helps participants to understand the issue and reach an informed decision</li> <li>Can help to develop knowledge and skills</li> </ul> <p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where more exploratory in nature they do not always provide clear consensus, so not always appropriate to answer very specific questions</li> <li>Can be relatively small number of participants so difficult to represent diverse range of views</li> <li>Where experts are not involved, high quality facilitation is particularly important</li> </ul>	<p><b>How do they work?</b></p> <p><b>Length of process:</b> From 3 hours to full days</p> <p><b>Number of participants:</b> Range from 14-5, but typical number is 10-12 per workshop</p>	<p><b>Examples:</b></p> <p>Workshops/dialogues are one of the common approaches identified in the review, and have been used to inform overarching infrastructure planning and to engage on specific aspects of infrastructure such as energy and water:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deliberative workshops for the Infrastructure Commission for Scotland and the National Infrastructure Commission</li> <li>Structured dialogues on consumer participation in energy and water policy (Citizens Advice Scotland)</li> <li>Workshops (using the term "citizens panels" for the National Transport Strategy</li> <li>The Big Climate Conversation (the Scottish Government)</li> <li>Future Cities Dialogues for Innovate UK and Sciencewise</li> </ul>	<p><b>Typical level of public engagement</b> (on the Spectrum of Public Participation)</p> <p>'Involve', or 'Collaborate'</p> <p>(but can be other levels depending on scope and format)</p>
Focus groups			
<p><b>What are they?</b></p> <p>Focus groups are discussions on topic, guided by a moderator, attended by a small number of participants. They are usually one-off sessions although a series of them may be run simultaneously across different</p>	<p><b>How do they work?</b></p> <p><b>Length of process:</b> 60-90 minutes</p>	<p><b>Examples:</b></p> <p>Used for a variety of topics and often as part of a mixed-method approach (e.g. focus groups used alongside a</p>	<p><b>Typical level of public engagement</b> (on the Spectrum of Public Participation)</p> <p>'Consult', or 'Involve'</p>

<p>geographic locations or among different demographic groups.</p> <p>Can be used on a wide range of topics and contexts, but the short time involved limits the depth of discussion possible.</p> <p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High level of involvement and interaction due to relatively small number of participants</li> <li>• Can target recruitment of particular demographic groups to ensure they are represented</li> </ul> <p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requires an experienced facilitator – or possibility of dominant participants/ others not contributing</li> <li>• Typically a small group of people who are not necessarily representative of wider community</li> </ul>	<p><b>Number of participants:</b> 6-12</p>	<p>survey, or in addition to larger workshops etc):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus groups on consumer participation in energy policy in Scotland (Citizens Advice Scotland)</li> <li>• A series of focus groups as part of Highways England's engagement strategy</li> <li>• A number of examples related to Scottish Water's customer engagement programme</li> </ul>	<p>(but can be other levels depending on scope and format)</p>
<b>Open consultations</b>			
<p><b>What are they?</b></p> <p>These consist of either public meetings, forums or online consultations, with the common factor being that they are 'open invitation', meaning any member of the community can attend/contribute their ideas</p> <p>Online consultations invite all residents/members of a community to contribute, and their views are gathered via online platforms, websites and social media platforms. Public meetings/area forums are typically community-based, are used to debate pressing issues and provide an opportunity for residents to ask questions.</p>	<p><b>How do they work?</b></p> <p><b>Length of process:</b> Consultation period can last weeks to months. Public meetings/forums usually run over an evening</p> <p><b>Number of participants:</b> Varies</p>	<p><b>Examples:</b></p> <p>Used for consultation on national strategy, including National Transport Strategy and new Infrastructure Investment Plan.</p> <p>Numerous examples of open consultations being held by local authorities to consult communities on planned or proposed developments in their area, such as windfarms (e.g. in Moray West, Orkney and Shetland), transport projects (e.g. Edinburgh trams) or city centre regeneration (e.g.</p>	<p><b>Typical level of public engagement</b> (on the Spectrum of Public Participation)</p> <p>'Inform' or 'Consult'</p> <p>(but can be other levels depending on scope and format)</p>

<p>These approaches are suited to projects/initiatives that may impact on a specific community/local area, where the aim is to consult with community members or gather feedback on proposals.</p> <p><b>Strengths:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If attendance is high, can reach large number of people</li> <li>• Having “open invite” approach, can demonstrate openness and transparency,</li> <li>• Can help garner publicity for a project</li> <li>• Can help community members to build networks.</li> </ul> <p><b>Weaknesses:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficult to ensure high level of attendance/participation</li> <li>• Without targeted recruitment, can risk lack of representation from different types of groups who may have different viewpoints</li> <li>• Can risk excluding participants if not held in an accessible location and at a convenient time</li> </ul>		<p>George Square Development in Glasgow.)</p> <p>Also used for consultation on major infrastructure projects such as Edinburgh Trams and Queensferry Crossing, and as part of Big Climate Conversation by the Scottish Government.</p>	
<b>Charrettes</b>			
<p><b>What are they?</b></p> <p>Design-based workshops that traditionally bring together people from different disciplines (e.g. architecture, planning, engineering, local government) along with members of the public to create a design and plan for a specific area. The design-led approach distinguishes charrettes from other forms of workshop.</p> <p>They are suited to master planning, local development planning and community regeneration projects.</p>	<p><b>How do they work</b></p> <p><b>Length of process:</b> 4 to 7 sessions</p> <p><b>Number of participants:</b> 25-500</p>	<p><b>Examples:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scottish Canals charrettes in Applecross, Woodside, Hamiltonhill and Firhill</li> <li>• Scottish Government suite of charrettes on the National Planning Framework 4, where engagement was targeted.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Typical level of public engagement</b> (on the Spectrum of Public Participation)</p> <p>‘Consult’, ‘Involve’, or ‘Collaborate’</p> <p>(but can be other levels depending on scope and format)</p>

<p><b>Strengths:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A creative process that allows participants to feed in directly to designs/plans for the area</li> <li>• Bring range of disciplines together that may not otherwise work together</li> <li>• Allows options to be tested and explored in a collaborative way</li> </ul> <p><b>Weaknesses:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ideas suggested and plans discussed during the process may not actually be delivered</li> <li>• May be difficult to ensure range of perspectives from the community are included, and that the process is not dominated by experts or interest groups</li> </ul>			
<b>Targeted engagement with specific groups</b>			
<p><b>What are they?</b></p> <p>Can take different forms, but involves engagement designed to engage with specific groups. These can be individuals living in a certain area (e.g. those living on a road impacted by infrastructure works), or a group whose views are of interest such as certain social grades, age groups, ethnicities, those with disabilities, etc.</p> <p>Particularly relevant if the aim of the engagement is to gain views from a specific group, but can also work alongside broader/open engagement as a means of ensuring that potentially under-represented groups have a chance of participating.</p> <p><b>Strengths:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help ensure potentially under-represented groups are involved</li> </ul>	<p><b>How do they work?</b></p> <p>Varies depending on approach taken and group involved</p>	<p><b>Examples:</b></p> <p>Used as part of broader engagement strategies including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Transport Strategy (engagement with young people via Young Scot and older people via Age Scotland)</li> <li>• National Infrastructure Commission's Young Professional's Panel</li> <li>• The Big Climate Conversations (included a youth workshop and targeted audience workshops)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Typical level of public engagement</b> (on the Spectrum of Public Participation)</p> <p>Can take different forms and therefore different levels of engagement</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can be used to complement other engagement approaches</li> <li>• Targeted at specific groups of interest</li> </ul> <p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Groups can be hard to reach/engage with</li> <li>• Need to be clear on reasons for specifically engaging with these groups</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep Scotland Beautiful engagement using the Place Standard approach (targeted engagement with schools and community groups including those supporting LGBT youth and young adults with additional support needs.</li> </ul>	
<b>Online engagement</b>			
<p><b>What is it?</b></p> <p>Participants' views are gathered via online platforms, website, email or social media. Online engagement can either be used as a standalone engagement approach or delivered as part of a mixed method project alongside offline, face-to-face engagement.</p> <p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can reach those who may be not be able/willing to engage through face to face methods</li> <li>• Not restricted to specific times/locations</li> </ul> <p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can exclude those without access to internet</li> <li>• Participants do not have the opportunity to engage with each other face-to-face as a group</li> </ul>	<p><b>How they work?</b></p> <p>Varies depending on the format and purpose</p>	<p><b>Examples:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Online communities used as part of Future Cities Dialogue for Innovate UK</li> <li>• Online engagement using 'digital immersion' used by Scottish Government to engage on its future strategy</li> <li>• UK Government's social media tool 'Involved', to engage with young people on range of issues via Instagram</li> </ul>	<p><b>Typical level of public engagement</b> (on the Spectrum of Public Participation)</p> <p>Can take different forms and therefore different levels of engagement</p>

The case studies below further highlight the range of methods that have been used to engage the public on infrastructure.

### **Case study 1: Understanding Legacy: the water industry's future investment plan (Trinity McQueen for Scottish Water and the Customer Forum)**

Purpose/ aims of the study:

- To explore how water customers plan for and think about future generations
- To understand view across different generations and customer types
- How previous legacies shape what customers think should be left behind for future generations
- Discover where Scottish Water, and the water industry, fits in the bigger picture

Methods used: A mixed method approach to engaging with domestic and business customers including:

- Online engagement ('digital immersion') used with 40 customers over 1 week
- Group discussion with 6 families, involving intergenerational participants
- 2 x 2 hour workshops with 10 members of the public from a range of backgrounds
- In-depth telephone interviews with 12 businesses
- An online survey with 1,000 participants

Findings from the research were used to inform Scottish Water's future strategy, as part of a wider programme of customer engagement.

### **Case study 2: Citizens' assembly on congestion, air quality and public transport (Involve for the Greater Cambridge Partnership)**

Purpose/aim: To develop recommendations on how to reduce congestion, improve air quality and provide better public transport in Greater Cambridge.

Method used: Citizens Assembly.

The Greater Cambridge Citizens' Assembly brought together 53 randomly selected residents from Greater Cambridge and the wider travel to work area during September and October 2019.

Of the measures they considered, members voted most strongly in favour of road closures, followed by a series of road charging options – including a pollution charge, a flexible charge based on peak time travel and a clean air zone. The Greater Cambridge Partnership's Executive Board considered the findings outlined in the report in early 2020.

### Case study 3: Future Cities, March 2017 (Innovate UK, Science Wise, Ipsos MORI)

#### Purpose/ aims of the study:

- To study the opportunities for integrated city systems, including future visions, citizen engagement and inter-disciplinary stakeholder collaboration and co-creation.
- To inform the development of the Infrastructure Systems team, especially the resulting competitions for funding, by providing citizen insights on possible future city scenarios.
- To enable Innovate UK to learn about the practice of designing and delivering processes of public dialogue to generate useful conclusions for sustainably integrating city systems that reflect the public voice.
- To provide Innovate UK with a clearer understanding of the opportunities and risks of systems integration in urban areas and the citizen response to different options.

#### Methods used: Citizen dialogue via public dialogue workshops and an online community

- Held across 3 locations: London, Glasgow and York – based on recent funding grants.
- 1 X 6 hour workshop session at each location. / 73 participants in total.
- Each workshop breakout group covered three systems, and their views were combined and compared at the end of the day in a plenary session.
- Online community to engage a wider section of the public and extend the research to cover different cities and regions of the country. Three online forums were set up on different topics.

The dialogue elicited 10 key principles which underpinned participants' preferences for the future cities they wanted to see and the integration they believed the UK should aim for. These principles helped Innovate UK understand public priorities and the kinds of technologies and futures that would be publicly acceptable.

## Case study 4: Deliberative workshops on the future of infrastructure in Scotland, July-August 2019 (Ipsos MORI for the Infrastructure Commission for Scotland)

Purpose/ aims of the study:

- To explore the public's views of Scotland's infrastructure and priorities for investment, by answering two questions:
  - What are the public's ambitions and priorities for Scotland's future infrastructure?
  - Which infrastructure categories do they see as most important for future investment?

Methods used: Deliberative workshops, combined with a desk-based literature review and an online survey of 1,000 adults.

- Workshops held across 4 locations: Glasgow, Edinburgh, Moffat, and Kinross
- Each workshop 3 hours duration, with average 18 people each (73 participants in total)
- First 2 workshops explored current views on infrastructure and future priorities for infrastructure investment
- Later 2 workshops involved testing of specific investment scenarios, including the 'trade-offs' participants would be willing to make between various advantages and disadvantages associated with each investment
- In each workshop, participants were split into separate groups according to their ages (16 to 34-year olds and over 35s), to allow for any intergenerational differences in views to emerge.

The findings were used to guide the work of the Infrastructure Commission for Scotland, including the development of recommendation on infrastructure ambitions and priorities for Scotland, contained within its 2020 report *A blueprint for Scotland*.

### Practical considerations

There are a number of key stages involved in the public engagement approaches identified in the review. These key stages are summarised below, drawing on Ipsos MORI's previous evidence review on public engagement approaches<sup>27</sup> updated for relevance to infrastructure.

#### Recruiting participants

A key stage in any public engagement exercise is identifying the right group of people to participate. The main approaches used to recruit participants for public engagement on infrastructure fall into four main groups:

1. **Sortition (also known as "civic lottery")**. This has been used for a number of citizens' assemblies and citizens' juries, such as Climate Assembly UK and the assembly on congestion, air quality and public transport in Cambridge. The first stage typically involves invites being sent to a large number of households, usually in writing. Of those members of the public that respond to the initial invite, participants are then selected using random stratified sampling (typically using computer software), with quotas set on key criteria to match the profile of the population (e.g. on age, gender, working status).

<sup>27</sup> Ipsos MORI for ClimateXChange (2020) Understanding and engaging the public on climate change, at <https://www.climatechange.org.uk/media/4231/understanding-and-engaging-the-public-on-climate-change.pdf>

Sortition has been used in the largest, highest profile citizens' assemblies where there is a focus on participants being representative of the population. Of the main approaches identified, sortition involves making contact with the largest number of people (e.g. 30,000 for Climate Assembly UK). This scale of contact means that Sortition is described by the Sortition Foundation<sup>28</sup> as a way of *"making it fair for everyone"* as it means *"everyone should, ideally, have an equal chance of being selected"*. Indeed, the draft set of standards for citizens' assemblies<sup>29</sup> recommends sortition as the ideal method for selecting citizens' to take part. However, the process takes time and is more resource intensive than other approaches.

**2. Free-find recruitment.** This has been used across a range of different methods, such as workshops delivered by Ipsos MOR for the Infrastructure Commission for Scotland and National Infrastructure Commission, citizens juries delivered by Ipsos MORI for University of Cambridge and Citizens Advice Scotland (CAS), and public engagement workshops delivered for DEFRA. The exact approach can vary, but it is generally conducted face-to-face and involves a recruiter (employed by an independent research or fieldwork agency) going door-to-door or in street to invite people to participate. Since COVID-19 and associated restrictions have been in place, recruitment is typically carried out by telephone. Screening questionnaires are used to assess key criteria, and quotas are set so that the sample matches the profile of the population.

Free-find methods have been used for different types of engagement, including focus groups, deliberative workshops, citizens juries, and online engagement. They offer the advantage of being able to target specific geographic areas and purposefully recruit individuals that match the desired criteria. It can, however, be time consuming and resource intensive.

**3. Recruitment targeted at specific groups.** When engagement is targeted at specific groups a range of approaches have been used depending on the project. For example, the targeted workshops for the Big Climate Conversation were advertised widely and then those that registered an interest completed a short screening questionnaire online to identify participants that matched the target criteria. As noted in Table 1.1 targeted recruitment offers the advantage of hearing from voices that might normally be under-represented in other forms of engagement. However, it is not appropriate if the aim is to represent a mix of different types of people or a representative sample. This approach is used when carrying out targeted engagement with specific groups, but can also form part of the recruitment approach for other methods (such as deliberative workshops, citizens juries, or focus groups) where the aim is to ensure representation from particular groups.

**4. Open-invitation approaches.** This approach is typically used for open consultations, where these events are advertised through various channels (e.g. social media, posters, leaflet drops) and anyone who is interested in participating is welcome to come along. Open-invitation approaches are less resource-intensive than others and in principle offer everyone who is invited with the opportunity to participate. However, as noted in Table 1.1, it can be difficult to guarantee how many people will respond meaning turnout can be lower than expected. There is also a risk that the same types of people tend to participate in open-invitation events, with harder to reach audiences being under-represented.

<sup>28</sup> [https://www.sortitionfoundation.org/what\\_is\\_sortition](https://www.sortitionfoundation.org/what_is_sortition)

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.involve.org.uk/resources/blog/news/when-citizens-assembly-not-citizens-assembly-towards-some-standards>

## Facilitation

Involvement of independent facilitators is standard practice in public engagement and should therefore be built into planning for future engagement on infrastructure. Several of the projects identified in the review (including all citizens' assemblies and juries examples, workshops for Infrastructure Commission for Scotland, National Infrastructure Commission, and citizens panels for the National Transport Strategy) used independent organisations with expertise in facilitation.

The draft standards for citizens' assemblies recommends that it is essential that they are independently and impartially facilitated, and if possible run by an organisation at arms-length from the commissioning body. In its guidance on citizens' assemblies and citizens' juries, Shared Futures noted that facilitators should *"ensure the process is not dominated by a vocal few and that everyone is able to have a fair say"*<sup>30</sup>.

## Other practical considerations

A number of further practical considerations will be important to bear in mind for future engagement on infrastructure. This include the duration of the engagement, the number of participants involved, and the incentives offered to participants:

- **Duration:** Research identified in this review suggests that the more time allowed for learning, dialogue and deliberation within a research project, the greater the impact the process is likely to have<sup>31</sup>. Citizens' assemblies tend to be the longest time commitments - draft standards for citizens' assemblies state that they should be at least 4 days (30 hours) and ideally up to 6 days (45 hours).
- **Number of participants:** The target number of participants will depend on the approach and what is trying to be achieved, and the ranges outlined in table 1.1 reflect the target numbers that are generally recommended for each. Involve recommend that citizens' assemblies are at least 40 people but ideally 100 or more, and that citizens' juries be around 12 to 24 people.
- **Incentive:** The payment of incentives for participants were used in several of the projects reviewed (though this information was not always clear for other projects) and in all of the face-to-face deliberative forms of engagement. The Market Research Society Code of Conduct provides guidance on the administration of incentives for participants.

## Delivering public engagement online

In light of the unprecedented changes brought about by COVID-19, public engagement methods have had to adapt to the very different contexts we all find ourselves in. One consequence of restrictions and guidance related to COVID-19 is that online approaches (typically using video software) have been used as alternatives to face-to-face methods of engagement. Indeed, for the second stage of this project, the public workshops were delivered online rather than face-to-face.

As part of our own response to COVID-19, Ipsos MORI has examined the relative merits of a range of alternatives to face-to-face engagements, including online deliberation as an alternative to citizens' assemblies or citizens' juries. Online deliberation offers a number of benefits as a way of engaging and involving the public in democratic decision making, namely:

<sup>30</sup> <https://sharedfuturecic.org.uk/citizens-assemblies-citizens-juries-and-climate-change/>

<sup>31</sup> [https://www.cas.org.uk/system/files/publications/meta-analysis\\_and\\_scoping\\_exercise\\_into\\_public\\_participation\\_in\\_the\\_regulated\\_industries\\_ipsos\\_mori\\_involve\\_-\\_2017-10-12.pdf](https://www.cas.org.uk/system/files/publications/meta-analysis_and_scoping_exercise_into_public_participation_in_the_regulated_industries_ipsos_mori_involve_-_2017-10-12.pdf)

- significant cost savings, without the need to travel, or pay out for other high costs such as venues, hotels and catering;
- an opportunity to bring people from different geographies together, in a more environmentally friendly way (i.e. less printing, reduced carbon footprint from travel);
- facilitates a wider range of experts being involved, including international contributions;
- people can be taken through the process slowly via a series of shorter sessions (e.g. 2-3 hours);
- potentially more accessible for those uncomfortable or unable to attend larger full-day events (people with mental and physical health challenges, those with caring responsibilities); and
- develops policy recommendations or interventions that can be observed by decision makers to create real buy-in.

While they offer a number of benefits, online deliberations also have a number of key considerations that should be borne in mind, namely:

- deciding the optimum number of participants, including how to manage smaller break out groups, as too many people may alienate participants, and a maximum of 50 may be most appropriate;
- choosing an online platform which works for participants, and whether the option to join by phone is necessary;
- participants may require assistance in learning how to use online platforms;
- deciding how long the learning phase should be – ideally this would be spread across multiple 2-3 hour sessions; and
- the need to adjust the approach for people with visual impairments and literacy challenges.

## Summary and implications for strand two

It is clear from this evidence review that there is no single, or 'best', approach to public engagement on infrastructure. Choosing the most appropriate method to use is just one of the considerations involved in planning an engagement project, albeit a vital one. A number of factors will be important to bear in mind including:

- the overall aims and objectives of the engagement,
- the level of desired engagement, and whether the purpose is to inform, consult, involve, collaborate with or empower the people that are being engaged
- the characteristics of the population of interest,
- the types of information or decisions that are sought from the public, and
- the resource and timescale available.

Practical considerations, including facilitation, number of participants, the role of experts and use of incentives will also be important.

The review has identified a number of methods that have been used to engage the public on infrastructure in the past and has highlighted some of the strengths and weaknesses associated with each. What is less clear from the evidence review is how participants themselves feel about their involvement – in other words how effective they feel these methods are as a means of engaging and letting their voices be heard.

Strand two therefore provided the opportunity to present examples of engagement approaches to members of the public and to gain insights into their relative strengths and weaknesses. Four approaches were chosen for testing in the workshops, as outlined in Table 2 below:

**Table 2: Engagement approaches tested in strand two**

Approach	Reason for testing	Aspects to test:  In addition to size, duration, method of recruitment, incentive
1. Deliberative workshops	The review identified several examples of deliberative engagement, whereby participants had the opportunity to consider relevant information, discuss the issues and options and develop their thinking together before coming to a view. Deliberative workshops have been used in a number of infrastructure-related projects, for example in research designed to inform national infrastructure strategy. It was therefore felt to be useful to hear participants' perspectives on the value (or otherwise) of this fairly common form of engagement.	Information provision and learning phase (including role of presenters/experts)  Role of deliberation, working together, challenging each other to reach a conclusion
2. Citizens Assemblies	There has been a resurgence of citizens' assemblies in recent years. While these have mainly been at a national level (e.g. Scotland's Climate Assembly) they have also recently been seen at a more local level (e.g. on traffic issues in Cambridge). Due to the high profile of recent/ongoing assemblies, further use of this method to inform policy decision making is likely.	Information provision and learning phase (including role of presenters/experts)  Roles and expectations from assembly members, and expected outcomes from the process
3. Online Communities	While not particularly common in the research, it provides a contrast to the 'in person' engagement techniques used via deliberative workshops and citizens' assemblies.	The use of electronic techniques, as a contrast to 'in person' discussions used in other approaches.  The ongoing nature, 'panel' style involvement in a community (i.e. not a one off engagement)  Level of interaction with each other, with less direct facilitation
4. Open consultations	Aside from deliberative methods, open consultations were one of the most common methods identified in the review and are widely used in local authority consultation on infrastructure projects. Due to their prevalence, it was felt to be worth testing public reaction to them.	'Open' nature of opportunities to contribute  Closer to inform/consult rather than engage on the Spectrum of Participation– is that enough?

# Strand two: findings from workshops

## Introduction

This chapter presents findings from the four online workshops carried out with members of the public. It starts by summarising participants' views on infrastructure in their local area. It then looks at views on how the public are engaged on infrastructure and what 'good' engagement looks like, before exploring reactions to some specific methods of public engagement.

Quotes from participants are included throughout this chapter. They have been kept anonymous, but to help distinguish them from each other we have included their gender, their location (Glasgow, Edinburgh, North of Scotland or South West of Scotland), and whether they were in an urban or rural location (for those in the North and South West).

## Views on infrastructure

*[Infrastructure] is everything that ties a community together. It keeps a level playing field... everyone uses the same things, whether rich or poor, within the community. (Female, North, Urban)*

Participants were generally familiar with the term 'infrastructure', though were not aware of the full range of categories covered by the Scottish Government's definition<sup>32</sup>. Asked what they associated with the term, a range of categories were mentioned spontaneously: transport, roads, housing, energy, water, schools and healthcare facilities. Other aspects were less well recognised, including telecommunications and internet, emergency services, waste management and flood prevention. Nonetheless, it was clear that infrastructure played an important role in participants' lives, with both positive and negative views emerging.

On the positive side, **natural infrastructure**, particularly access to parks and green spaces were considered valuable aspects of local infrastructure. Parks, green spaces and walkways were seen as being particularly important during COVID-19 and lockdown restrictions, as they had provided a place to walk, exercise, and get outside. Those in rural areas were also very positive about their natural infrastructure, mentioning the landscape, mountains, and coastlines close to where they lived. In Glasgow and Edinburgh, participants generally felt well-connected in terms of public transport and felt they had good access to shops and amenities such as GP surgeries.

However, these positive views were outweighed by more negative opinions about local infrastructure, particularly in relation to roads, housing, and in rural areas, public transport.

**Roads** were criticised by participants in both urban and rural areas, with the general sentiment being that they were poorly maintained. Those in the North and South West felt there was a lack of investment in their road infrastructure, with a perceived need for improvements to road conditions (such as potholes) and the provision of wider roads or more dual carriageways to improve connectivity across rural areas.

<sup>32</sup> After being asked, unprompted, what they associated with the term infrastructure, participants were then shown the Scottish Government's definition: "The physical and technical facilities, natural and other fundamental systems necessary for the economy to function and to enable, sustain or enhance societal living conditions. These include the networks, connections and storage relating to the enabling infrastructure of transport, energy, water, telecoms, digital and internet, to permit the ready movement of people, goods and services. They include the built environment of housing; public infrastructure such as education, health, justice and cultural facilities; safety enhancement such as waste management or flood prevention; natural assets and networks that supply ecosystem services and public services such as emergency services and resilience."

Those in Edinburgh and Glasgow expressed frustration at the disruption caused by what they felt were frequent and lengthy road works in the cities.

Concerns about **housing** mainly related to new developments in urban areas, with participants feeling there were too many new properties being built close to their area. They felt these developments would increase traffic congestion, put pressure on local services, and reduce the amount of green spaces in the area. The quality of new housing developments was also questioned, due to the speed at which they were being built.

*Every piece of land is getting snapped up by a developer. But are there plans for new schools with all these new houses? I don't know if there will be enough amenities in the area ... everything is at full capacity. (Female, Glasgow)*

**Public transport** was an issue for those in rural areas in the North and the South West, where it was felt there were few, if any, suitable options. Where public transport did exist in these areas, it was considered too infrequent, lengthy, or in inconvenient locations. Lack of public transport in these areas was seen as sustaining a reliance on cars, even when participants themselves would have liked to reduce their car use for environmental reasons.

*Transport links up here are no short of abysmal really. From where I live into Inverness, which is only 15 miles away, you are lucky if you get one bus an hour... the infrastructure in the Highlands is not great. (Female, North, Rural).*

In addition to roads and public transport, those in rural areas felt their infrastructure was generally poor and that they were lower priority for investment than those in urban areas and the central belt. Specific issues raised included a lack of access to fibre broadband, lack of electric vehicle charging points, and a lack of accessible hospitals.

### Infrastructure decision-making

Participants felt that decisions about infrastructure were usually taken by central or local government, with little, if any, involvement of the public. Some suggested that decisions were often taken “behind closed doors”, citing examples of new housing developments, road works, and closure of local community facilities occurring without (to participants’ knowledge) any consultation with the local community.

*Who is actually asking me about improvements on the road I live on? Nobody. Who is asking me about improvements on the broadband issues? These are just decisions that are made at a different level (Male, North, Rural).*

There was also a concern that public engagement about infrastructure was often poorly advertised, or “hidden away” in specific sections of newspapers or websites, making it difficult for most people to contribute. The language used in notices about consultations, for example by local authorities, was also seen as overly complex which added a further barrier to participation.

*They are like legal documents, small print, long and detailed, [with] paragraphs and sub paragraphs. Apart from the headline, I'm not going to read it. They don't make it easy. (Male, South West, Rural)*

Where participants had taken part in, or been aware of, public engagement activities, they were sceptical about the extent to which the public's views had been taken into account. There was a perception that these activities were too often “tokenistic” or “tick box” exercises, with the outcomes of the process being pre-determined or not reflecting the contributions made by the public. Some participants described their own experiences of taking part in consultations, such as public meetings about new building developments in their areas or objections they had made to planning applications, which they felt had had little impact. A key reason for this sense of distrust was that participants felt findings from public engagement exercises were rarely shared with those that took part, adding to the sense that the exercise was tokenistic and not meaningful.

*People are consulted because they have to be consulted, but I don't always think what they want or think is taken into account. Half the time I believe that these decisions have already been made. (Male, South West, Rural)*

Those in rural areas expressed further concern that decisions on infrastructure were often made by central government, without enough consideration of the needs of rural communities. One example of this was in relation to promoting greater use of public transport or electric vehicles as a means of help tackle the climate emergency. Rural participants felt they lacked the infrastructure, in terms of either public transport or charging points, to make those changes.

*You can end up feeling remote from government and with a notion that central politicians don't have a clue what life is like in rural Aberdeenshire or in Stornoway or in Highland. [Male, North, Rural]*

Overall, these issues had led to a lack of trust in the efficacy of public engagement on infrastructure. This, in turn, had created a feeling that it was simply not worth taking part in.

*No one wants to put forward what they think because they don't think it is ever going to get them anywhere, so they don't go and try. (Female, North, Urban)*

Though the overarching sentiment was one of cynicism, there had been some positive experiences of public engagement on infrastructure. These tended to be those that were driven by members of a community in response to a particular issue, described by one participant as a “grass roots” form of public engagement. An example of this community-level engagement was a community council organising and delivering improvements to walkways in response to concerns from members of the community. Another was in relation to a Housing Association improving communal green spaces and installing electric vehicle charging points following requests from residents.

*I think when it is people's own individual space they tend to be that bit more passionate about it... when [decision making] becomes decentralised I think it can be a bit more inclusive and people can have a bit more power. (Male, Glasgow).*

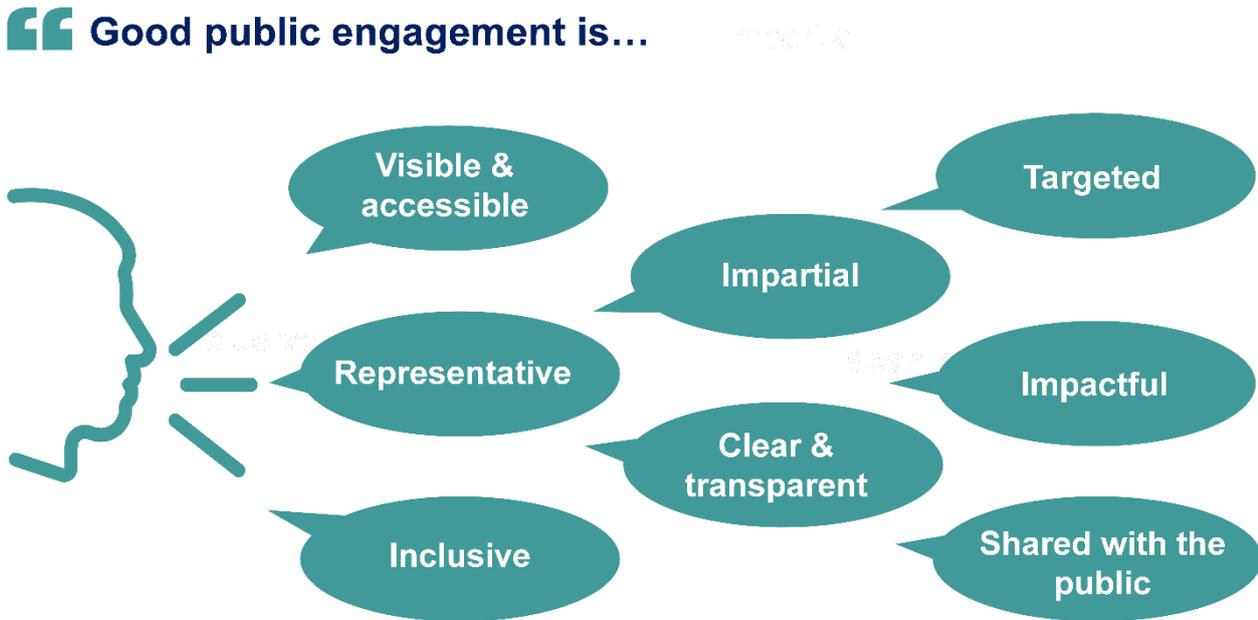
## Principles of ‘good’ public engagement

In spite of a general scepticism about the public's role in previous infrastructure decisions, participants nonetheless highlighted the important role that public engagement can play. When done well, they felt that public engagement provides an opportunity for the public to influence decisions about their local area or the country as a whole, ultimately helping to making it a better place to live and grow up in.

*Having a voice gives people a sense of purpose... at the end of the day someone might actually listen and that might change things as a result. (Female, South West, Urban)*

Participants discussed what ‘good’ public engagement would look like to them. The following key themes emerged (summarised in Figure 2 and outlined in more detail below), which echo some of the best practice principles identified in the literature and described in chapter one.

**Figure 2: Participants’ suggested key principles of good public engagement**



**Visible and accessible**

*You really need people to know what is happening... that initial hit, explaining what you want to know and how they can [get involved]. If people don't know it is happening, they are not going to respond. (Male, Edinburgh)*

One of the concerns raised about public engagement on infrastructure was that it was often poorly advertised, meaning not enough people had opportunities to take part. For example, consultations on local planning decisions were considered difficult to find unless you had an existing interest and already knew what part of the local authority website to get to. Too often, it was felt, people heard about the outcomes of these decisions when it was too late to contribute their own views.

It was therefore suggested that public engagement should be widely publicised so that as many people as possible have the chance to contribute. It was suggested that a mix of methods should be used including letters and leaflets through the post and notices in public spaces, newspapers, websites and social media.

**Representative**

*It is about representativeness... that makes it more robust and credible. (Male, Rural, South West).*

It was felt that the people who are asked to participate in public engagement activities should be representative of the population that the engagement is targeted at, whether that population is a small community or the country as a whole. In order to be representative, it was felt that efforts should be

taken to ensure a diverse range of participation that reflects the characteristics of the population, including in relation to gender, age, working status ethnicity and disability.

This principle mirrors some of the those identified in previous research, such as the need for representativeness highlighted in the OECD good practice principles for deliberative processes<sup>33</sup>.

### Inclusive

*You need a diverse range of people from different backgrounds, different ages, different jobs, so you get a balanced opinion. So that it's not just a couple of people from similar backgrounds railroading others down one track. (Male, South West, Rural)*

As well as being representative, it was felt that good public engagement should be as inclusive of different groups in society as possible. There was a perception that certain groups are sometimes under-represented in public engagement, such as young people, those on lower incomes and those with disabilities. Participants felt that effort should be taken to encourage these groups to take part.

Inclusion of diverse groups was seen as essential in order to understand the ways in which infrastructure decisions may impact people in different ways. For example, it was felt that the views of people with physical disabilities should be taken into account when planning buildings to ensure they are accessible, and that the views of young people should be taken into account when thinking about how facilities might be used in future.

This principle also links closely with that seen in the literature, with inclusion or inclusiveness being one of the National Standards for Community Engagement<sup>34</sup> and one of the OECD good practice principles for deliberative processes.

### Clear and transparent

*It should be transparent so that everything is really simple and easy to follow so that you can engage with the topic in whatever way you want. (Female, Glasgow)*

Participants felt good public engagement should include the provision of clear information about the purpose of the engagement, what participation involves, and what decisions it will help to inform. Making information clear, easy to understand and accessible in a variety of formats was seen as an important way of encouraging participation and being inclusive.

Being clear and transparent on the objectives and purpose of the engagement would also help to ensure a common understanding of the public's role and manage expectations about what the outcomes of the engagement were likely to be. It was also felt that this would help minimise the risk of people feeling that decisions had already been made, or that there was a "hidden agenda" to the engagement.

This principle again overlaps with those seen in previous literature, with transparency being one of the OECD good practice principles.

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/gov/open-government/good-practice-principles-for-deliberative-processes-for-public-decision-making.pdf>

<sup>34</sup> <https://www.scdc.org.uk/what/national-standards>

## Impartial

*It needs to be organised by individuals that are completely unbiased of whatever the subject matter being discussed is. (Male, South West, Rural)*

Participants felt that good public engagement should be impartial and unbiased, without being influenced by any political agenda. It was felt this could be achieved through an independent organisation being involved in organising, facilitating and reporting on the findings of the engagement exercise. This was linked to a perception that previous decisions had been influenced by individuals or organisations with commercial interests, for example property developers in relation to planning decisions, or transport companies in relation to investment in transport infrastructure.

## Targeted

*I think people should be consulted in what is going on in their own local area, because the people that know the needs of the area best are the people that live in that area. (Female, Glasgow).*

For public engagement to be meaningful, it was felt that it should involve those most likely to be impacted by the outcomes. It was suggested that a targeted, community-focussed approach should be taken, meaning that engagement on decisions that would affect a particular area should involve those that live in that area. As discussed earlier, those in rural areas of Highland and Aberdeenshire in particular felt that decisions were too often made centrally, without sufficient engagement with those in rural areas.

## Impactful

*Good public engagement would be impactful and decisive... it would be action focused and there would be a direct link to decision makers. (Male, Edinburgh).*

It was felt that good public engagement should make a difference. To achieve this, participants felt that findings from the engagement exercise should be communicated directly to the individuals responsible for making decisions, and then drawn upon when making those decisions. Ideally, public engagement would lead to real action as a result of the contributions made by members of the public.

The principle of impact is highlighted in the National Standards for Community Engagement, and is one of the Sciencewise principles for best practice in public dialogue<sup>35</sup>.

## Shared with the public

*The results of these consultations should be as widely promoted as the consultation itself. So if you engage with the consultation you should be guaranteed that you're going to receive the outputs from it. You are less likely to become disengaged with it if you can actually see the outputs. (Female, Glasgow).*

Participants also felt that a crucial aspect of demonstrating the impact of engagement was that the findings should be communicated and shared with the public, especially those that participated in the engagement exercise. It was suggested that this could be achieved by sending participants a report or a summary of findings or reconvening a group to discuss how the findings had been used. This was a feature seen as lacking from former examples of public engagement. It was felt that sharing the findings

<sup>35</sup> <https://sciencewise.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Guiding-Principles.pdf>

with those who participated would help to illustrate that their contributions had been taken seriously and had made a difference.

### Testing public engagement methods

The good practice principles of public engagement were further confirmed when participants were asked to assess the strengths and weakness of four examples of public engagement in practice. Having seen four examples (deliberative workshops, citizens assemblies, open consultations and online communities), the positive aspects that stood out were:

- Where efforts were taken to include as many people as possible (**visible and accessible**) and to ensure representation from a mix of demographic groups (**representative and inclusive**)
- Information provided to the public, either in advance or during the engagement activity, was clear and unambiguous, particularly in relation to the purpose of the exercise (**clear and transparent**)
- The use of independent organisations to organise and facilitate the public engagement (**impartial**)
- Involvement of people that would most likely be impacted by the decisions, for example involving road users in engagement designed to help inform decisions about roads (**targeted**)
- Members of the public being given the opportunity to generate ideas themselves and make recommendations based on their own input, with the aim of those recommendations being acted upon (**impactful**).

## Example 1: National Infrastructure Commission public engagement (2018)

### Method used: Deliberative Workshops

The National Infrastructure Commission (NIC) commissioned Ipsos MORI to explore how the public felt about the UK's strategic approach to infrastructure challenges over the next ten to thirty years, in order to inform the National Infrastructure Assessment in 2018, and contribute to the wider work of the NIC.

#### Summary of approach

- Participants were recruited by telephone, with targets to ensure a mix of ages, genders, work situation, and ethnicity
- 8 face-to-face workshops carried out in 8 different locations across England
- Each workshop consisted of a 3-hour group discussion
- 16 people at each workshop, split into 2 tables of 8
- Independent facilitators

#### Key features:

- Participants were asked to discuss what the future of infrastructure in the UK should look like.
- They were shown different "visions" of the future (using posters as visual stimulus) and asked what was good/bad about them
- Then discussed what types of changes they would like to see to specific types of infrastructure, with each group focussing on a few categories.
- Findings were written up in a report, to help NIC make recommendations to the UK Government

Link to report of findings from the research:

<https://nic.org.uk/app/uploads/Ipsos-MORI-Phase-2-of-social-research-Final-report.pdf>

This example received a mixed response from participants, with both positive and negative aspects being highlighted. Overall, however, it was largely viewed as a good example of public engagement in practice.

#### Positive aspects

- It was considered an inclusive approach, with a mix of ages, genders, working status and ethnicities being recruited.
- The size of the group discussions, with 8 people at individual tables. This was seen as a good number to allow focussed discussion, providing everyone with a chance to contribute their views.
- The use of stimulus to help generate ideas (in this case the posters showing three "visions" for the future of infrastructure). They felt it might be difficult to imagine what the future might look like, so stimulus was considered a helpful way of giving participants something to react to.

- As infrastructure is a vast topic, the fact that each group concentrated on a few specific aspects of infrastructure (rather than the whole topic), was considered a good way to make the engagement more focussed and avoid being overwhelmed by information.
- The use of independent facilitators was seen as encouraging, suggesting it was impartial.

#### Negatives aspects:

- Some felt that 128 people was too small to get the range of different perspectives and represent the range of different groups that should be included.
- The information provided at the recruitment stage was seen as too vague: describing the engagement as about “gathering public opinion”. It was suggested more explanation of the topic and the reason for the engagement would help make it more transparent.
- The future of infrastructure was seen as a vast and potentially difficult topic to give an opinion on, therefore some felt it would be difficult to engage with the topic unless the information presented was clear and easy to understand.
- The impact of this engagement approach was questioned, as participants found it difficult to judge whether the recommendations made by participants had actually resulted in change, aside from the production of the report for the NIC. It was suggested that these types of workshops should be reconvened after the report had been prepared to share what the recommendations were.

## Example 2: Scotland's Climate Assembly (2020-2021) (Ongoing)

### Method used: Citizens Assembly

Scotland's Climate Assembly brought together a group of people broadly representative of the Scottish population. Assembly members took on the task of learning about, discussing and making recommendations on how we can best tackle climate change. In 2021, the Assembly will report to the Scottish Parliament on the outcomes of their deliberations.

#### Summary of approach

- Invites were sent by post to 20,000 addresses, people registered their interest, and were then selected to match targets (i.e. using a sortition approach to recruitment)
- 105 people were selected, designed to be representative (mix of geography, age, gender, income, ethnicity, disability, attitudes to climate change)
- Meetings were carried out online, and will take place over 6 weekends
- Independent facilitators

#### Key features:

- Assembly members learn about and discuss the question: "How should Scotland change to tackle the climate emergency in an effective and fair way?"
- Given information to help learn about the topic, including presentations for range of experts
- Will create recommendations that will be delivered to the Scottish Parliament

Link to website: <https://www.climateassembly.scot/>

The approach used in Scotland's Climate Assembly received generally positive feedback. In particular, the level of commitment and responsibility given to Assembly members, and the potential impact of their decisions, made this example stand out from the others. The main criticism, however, was the length of time required to participate.

#### Positive aspects:

- One of the key strengths of this approach was in relation to the role of the Assembly members and the level of responsibility they were given. It was considered more of a "bottom up" than "top down" style of decision making, as the Assembly members themselves were tasked with coming up with answers, rather than responding to plans that had already been pre-determined. The planned presentation of the results to the Scottish Parliament further emphasised significance of the role Assembly members had been given.
- It was considered an inclusive approach, with Assembly members recruited to be representative of the population.
- The information provided at the recruitment stage was seen as clear and unambiguous. The invite made clear that it was about climate change and provided details such as the number of meetings, the length of involvement, and incentive amount. Some felt the use of logos on the invite also made it look credible.

- The length of the involvement, while long, was also seen as adding a sense of legitimacy to the process. It was suggested that people would only take part if they felt committed to the process and to the topic, and that this might result in better quality input than would be possible in a one-off session. Having time to reflect on the topic between sessions was also seen as a strength.
- The role of experts providing information to the Assembly members was seen as a good way of helping them to learn about the topic and inform their discussions.

#### Negative aspects:

- Due to the length of commitment involved, there might be a risk that certain people would be unable to take part including those who work, have childcare or other responsibilities at weekends.
- Conducting the Assembly meetings online might provide a further barrier, for those without access to internet or a device that they could use to connect.
- Due to the number of people involved, the number and length of meetings, and the size of the amount of financial incentive paid to participants, it was felt that citizens assemblies were likely to be an expensive approach to engagement and therefore difficult to replicate without sufficient resource.
- As with other forms of engagement, it was suggested that there was a need for more information about how Assembly members' views would be used and what the outcomes would be after they had been presented to the Scottish Parliament.

### Example 3: Scotland's National Transport Strategy (2020)

#### Method used: Open Consultation

The National Transport Strategy sets out a Vision for the transport system in Scotland for the next 20 years. Following an initial programme of engagement to inform the development of a draft Strategy, in 2019 Scottish Ministers launched a full public consultation on that draft Strategy. The consultation was hosted on the Transport Scotland website and ran between 31 July and 23 October 2019.

#### Summary of approach

- An open consultation hosted on the Scottish Government website
- Anyone who wanted to submit a response could do so online
- Involved reading the draft strategy document and submitting your views by answering 19 questions
- Could also give views by telephone or by e-mail

#### Key features:

- Responses were analysed by Transport Scotland to help inform the final National Transport Strategy
- Those who contributed had the choice of being anonymous or having responses published on the website

#### Link to consultation report:

<https://www.transport.gov.scot/media/47045/national-transport-strategy-consultation-report.pdf>

Overall, this example was less appealing than the others, with negative comments outweighing the positive. The key criticisms of this approach were in relation to its accessibility and the level of effort required to contribute.

#### Positive aspects:

- The open nature of the consultation was seen as a strength, meaning that anyone who was aware of the consultation and knew how to contribute could do so.
- Within the consultation period, individuals could contribute their views in their own time, without having to commit to being available on a certain day or time.

#### Negatives aspects:

- The consultation was considered somewhat "hidden" and not widely accessible. Participants felt that it might be difficult for the public to know the consultation was taking place and then know where to find it. Participants said they were unaware that this consultation had taken place, so questioned the effectiveness of the promotion and communication surrounding it.
- As the website was the primary means through which the public could contribute their views, it was felt this may exclude those unable or unwilling to go online.

- The level of engagement was seen as fairly onerous, requiring the public to read the draft strategy and then complete 19 questions in response. It was suggested this would put many people off, apart from those with an existing interest in the draft strategy or those with specialist knowledge of the topic. This, in turn, could mean that results were not representative of the wider public and risked being skewed by individuals with strong views.
- It was suggested this format may be less effective than group-based forms of engagement, as there was no opportunity for discussion, sharing of ideas, or forming of different views as a result of hearing other perspectives.

## Example 4: Highways England Customer Panel (ongoing)

### Method used: Online Community

Highways England worked with Ipsos MORI to create a flexible customer panel to be used to answer a range of different business questions over a two-year period.

#### Summary of approach

- Around 2,000 members of the public were recruited to join the panel, through a range of recruitment techniques
- All have used the road network in last 12 months
- Mix of ages, genders, geography, disability, ethnicity

#### Key features:

- Those who join are then invited to take part in a range of different activities including short surveys, forums, blogs and other activities designed to gauge customers' experiences of the network.
- Findings from the engagement activities help Highways England understand the views of road users and what decisions they need to take.

This approach received mixed views, though on balance it was seen as a good way of engaging with road users. The use of a variety of techniques and the flexible nature of involvement stood out as they positive features.

#### Positive aspects:

- The Customer Panel was considered a flexible approach to engagement. Using a mix of different forms of engagement allowed panel members to choose when and how they wanted to contribute their views. As it was online, it also offered flexibility in terms being able to take part from the comfort of your own home.
- The open and discursive nature of online forums were seen as a good way of encouraging people to hear a range of different perspectives
- The number of people that had joined the panel (2,000) was considered large enough to allow a range of different perspectives to be gathered.

- The ability to leave the panel at any time was welcomed, as otherwise two years may feel like too long a commitment to make.

#### Negative aspects:

- The panel being conducted online may risk excluding those who might wish to contribute their views but who are unable to go online.
- With online forums, it was felt there was a need for these to be carefully moderated to avoid people dominating the discussions and attempting to influence other people's views.
- The two year commitment was, for some, seen as potentially off-putting (even though it was acknowledged that panel members could leave at any time).

### Delivering public engagement in future

Turning to how future public engagement on infrastructure should be delivered, participants emphasised the need to put in place the characteristics they associated with 'good' public engagement (as outlined earlier). When tasked with suggesting the most appropriate method to engage with people in their local community, participants tended to focus on those best practice principles rather than on specific methods.

The overarching view was that that a mix of methods should be used to engage with the public, adapted to suit different needs, rather than one single approach. That said, participants did single out some approaches that they felt would be particularly effective. These highlighted a desire for local, community-based engagement, as well as a combination of both online and offline approaches:

- **Group discussions**, whether in the form of workshops or focus groups, were seen as good ways of encouraging a range of opinions on a specific topic. It was also suggested that groups of residents from a local community, representing a range of different demographics, could be set up to act as a panel to engage with on an ongoing basis.
- **Face-to-face engagement in the community**, through speaking to people in shops, GP surgeries, libraries or community centres. This was seen as a way of bringing the engagement to people, rather than asking them to go to a place at certain day or time. It was suggested that young people, including school pupils, could be involved in conducting the engagement.
- **Open meetings** held on different days and time to allow as many people to contribute as possible. It was also suggested that these could take the form of **'pop-up' consultation spaces** in a central, accessible location, where passers-by can drop in and give their views on the issue.
- **Social media** to both inform people about the engagement exercise but also to conduct the engagement. For example, using local Facebook groups to generate discussion on a topic, or Facebook Live to speak directly to people.
- **Online, video-based** engagement using Zoom or similar platforms was seen as an effective way of bringing people together without constraints around geography or travel. It was felt that COVID-19 had led people to engage with each other in different ways and feel more comfortable using technology and taking part in video discussions. It was acknowledged, however, that not everyone would be able to take part online and that other methods should be made available.

Regardless of the methods used, it was stressed that the approach used should reflect the purpose of the engagement and who is being engaged.

*No one approach will catch every different group ... [public engagement] should try to involve as many different people with as many different approaches as possible. (Male, North, Urban).*

## Summary

Workshop participants recognised the potential value of public engagement and its role in helping to shape decisions on infrastructure. However, it was clear they were sceptical about the way public engagement on infrastructure had been carried out in the past. Previous experiences had left participants feeling that public engagement did not happen enough, and when it did it was either tokenistic or did not lead to real change.

For public engagement to work well, participants felt it needed to meet their criteria of being:

- Visible and accessible
- Representative
- Inclusive
- Clear and transparent
- Impartial
- Targeted
- Impactful
- Shared with the public.

These principles of good engagement very much reflected those seen in previous literature and were considered important, regardless of the particular method used. Indeed, participants tended to judge the four examples of public engagement activities in terms of how well they fitted these principles, for example commenting on the extent to which they were inclusive, clear, or impartial.

In terms of the best methods to use, participants echoed the finding of the evidence review in chapter one: there was no one method seen as the most effective way of engaging the public on infrastructure. Their preference was for a mix of methods to appeal to as broad a range of people as possible, or for the method to be chosen in response to the purpose of the engagement and the audience being engaged with.

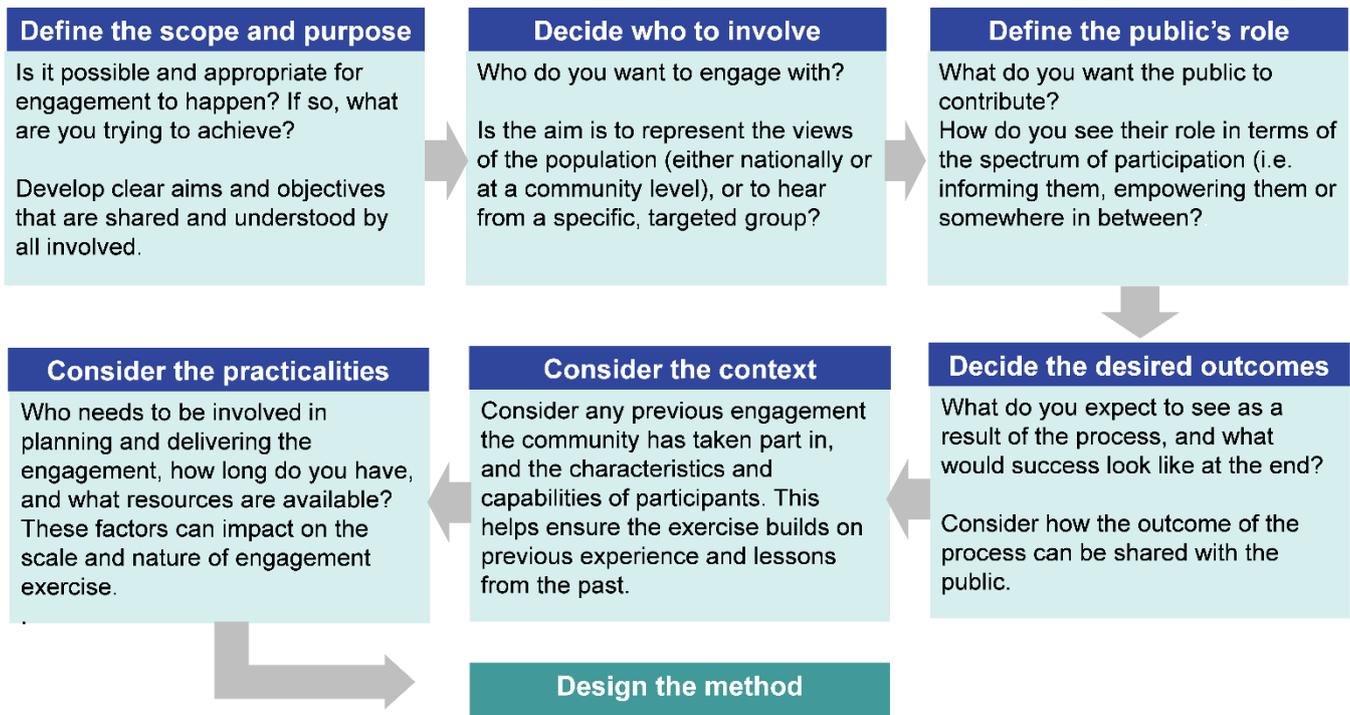
# Conclusion

This research sought to explore the range of methods used to engage the public on infrastructure and to help understand what approach would work best in particular situations.

The evidence review made clear that a range of potential engagement approaches can, and have, been used on the topic of infrastructure. These vary widely in terms of size (from 5-6 person focus groups to Citizens Assemblies of over 100 people), duration (from a couple of hours to several weekends), format (offline and online), topic and purpose. Previous research shows that the method of engagement is just one, albeit vital, factor to be considered when designing effective public engagement.

Before choosing the most appropriate approach to public engagement, a number of factors will be important to bear in mind and a number of stages should be followed. These key stages are summarised in Figure 3 below, which draws on the Sciencewise and other best practice principles identified in the evidence review.

**Figure 3: Key stages to consider when planning public engagement**



When it comes to the actual method for engaging the public on infrastructure, both strands of the research made clear that there was no single, or ‘best’ approach. Participants felt there were benefits and drawbacks to a number of methods, including citizens’ assemblies, workshops, online communities, and open consultations, but did not have a clear preference on which method should be used in future. Instead, they felt that a range of approaches should be used to allow as much flexibility as possible. A strong theme that emerged from the workshops, however, was a desire for engagement to be carried out at a “grass roots” level, involving the members of communities that will be ultimately be impacted by any decisions taken as a result.

Though no single method emerged as the preferred approach overall, the research has shown that certain methods work better in particular circumstances than others. It is therefore possible to identify the

types of methods that might work best depending on the purpose and context of the engagement (Table 3). Note this is not an exhaustive list, but focusses on the key methods that emerged from the research.

Regardless of the approach used, a number of best practice principles were identified by workshop participants. These principles echoed those identified in the literature, for example in the National Standards of Community Engagement, the Sciencewise Principles for Public Dialogue, and the OECD Good Practice Principles for Deliberation. In spite of COVID-19 changing the way the public are engaged with, it seems that principles of good public engagement are therefore largely unchanged from those identified pre-pandemic. This emphasises the importance of future public engagement being carried out with those principles in mind.

Another strong message from the workshops was the need for the outcomes of public engagement to be shared with those who participated and for those findings to be acted. Too often, it was felt, the public are left unaware of how their input has been used and what outcomes it has helped achieve.

Of course, COVID-19 has brought about new ways of engaging with the public, and hastened the use of more online, virtual methods of engagement – including in the workshops carried out for this research. Though the extent to which these newer methods continue in the recovery from COVID-19 remains to be seen, participants saw these methods as a way of widening opportunities for the public to get involved, and therefore a positive development in the delivery of public engagement.

Finally, it is worth highlighting that workshop participants, though familiar with the term infrastructure, were not aware of the full range of categories covered by the Scottish Government's definition. They associated the term with transport, roads, housing, energy, water, schools and healthcare facilities. However, other aspects were less well recognised, including telecommunications and internet, emergency services, waste management and flood prevention. When engaging with the public on infrastructure, therefore, there may need to be some awareness-raising of the full breadth of categories that it includes.

**Table 3: Engagement methods for different purpose and context**

Method	Purpose and context of the engagement	Typical level of public engagement					Typical delivery mode			Time	No. of participants	Cost <sup>36</sup>	Factors to consider when planning and delivering this approach
		Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower	Face-to-face	Online	Paper/Postal				
<b>Citizens assemblies</b>	<p>To examine broad policy objectives and/or assess policy options.</p> <p>To develop recommendations for action by government and other decision makers.</p> <p>To empower the public to develop recommendations and take decisions.</p> <p>To be representative of the population.</p>			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		<p>Multiple sessions, usually over a Saturday and Sunday, meeting for 3-6 hours each day</p> <p>Over several weekends (from 2 – 8)</p>	50-250 (typically 100)	High	<p>Recruitment of participants is an important first stage, with sortition being the ideal method (though free-find recruitment with demographic quotas has also been used).</p> <p>Requires significant time and resource, both in terms of people and cost.</p> <p>There can be an expectation that the outcomes of a citizens' assembly will inform policy, therefore having buy-in from policy makers and a direct link with decision makers can help legitimise the process.</p>
<b>Citizens juries</b>	<p>To answer a specific policy-related question, where there may be different perspectives or different positions taken by experts.</p> <p>To have fairly focussed engagement, with relatively small number of people.</p>			✓	✓		✓	✓		<p>Multiple sessions, each 3-6 hours.</p> <p>Delivered over 2 to 7 days</p>	12-24	Medium	<p>As participants are asked to consider "evidence" on a particular topic, it is important to consider the experts that present information to the citizens' jury. A balanced perspective should be given, without leading the conclusion.</p>

<sup>36</sup> Costs were not available for all the methods identified in this research and where they were, they varied depending on the scale, duration and nature of the exercise. However, for comparison purposes we have indicated where the method is most likely to sit on a scale of low, medium and high cost relative to other methods.

Method	Purpose and context of the engagement	Typical level of public engagement					Typical delivery mode			Time	No. of participants	Cost <sup>36</sup>	Factors to consider when planning and delivering this approach
		Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower	Face-to-face	Online	Paper/Postal				
<b>Deliberative workshops and public dialogues</b>	<p>To have in-depth engagement on a specific topic, with relatively small number of people</p> <p>To ask participants to learn about and respond to information on a specific topic</p> <p>To test specific policy option, or generate ideas on a particular issue, or understand how the public feel about a particular issue.</p>			✓	✓		✓	✓		From 3 hours to full day	10-12	Low-medium	<p>Level of engagement from the public depends on the overall purpose and objectives.</p> <p>Having a clear focus and purpose including clarity around how the decisions made will have impact/make a difference, can make this method more engaging for participants.</p> <p>Usually requires the provision of information to help aid understanding and stimulate discussion/deliberation, in the form of presentations or written/visual stimulus.</p>
<b>Focus groups</b>	To have short term (one off) engagement with small number of people on a specific topic		✓	✓			✓	✓		60-90 minutes	6-12	Low	<p>Can be used on a wide range of topics and contexts, but the short time involved limits the depth of discussion possible.</p> <p>With small numbers the aim is typically not to be representative. However, recruitment can be carried out to ensure certain characteristics are included (e.g. targets on certain demographic groups).</p>

Method	Purpose and context of the engagement	Typical level of public engagement					Typical delivery mode			Time	No. of participants	Cost <sup>36</sup>	Factors to consider when planning and delivering this approach
		Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower	Face-to-face	Online	Paper/Postal				
<b>Open consultations</b>	<p>To informing or consult about plans or proposals that have already been drafted/ developed.</p> <p>To engage on projects/ initiatives that may impact on a specific community/ local area.</p> <p>To allow as many people as possible to contribute views.</p>	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	<p>Consultation period can last weeks to months.</p> <p>Public meetings/ forums usually run over a single day/ evening</p>	Varies	Low	<p>Importance of publicity, to make the engagement as visible and accessible as possible.</p> <p>Could supplement the open consultation with other, more targeted approaches (e.g. separate engagement with young people to ensure their perspectives are heard).</p>
<b>Charrettes</b>	<p>A design-led approach used to involve the public in developing plans for a specific areas, such as local development plans, master plans, community regeneration plans.</p> <p>To bring together the public and experts from a range of disciplines, with a focus on design.</p>		✓	✓	✓		✓			<p>Multiples sessions, usually between 4 and 7</p>	25-500	Medium-High	<p>Important to set expectations around how the ideas and designs developed through the process will actually be used.</p> <p>Typically use an open consultation approach, where member of the public self-select to come (rather than being recruited based on specific criteria). Important to therefore consider how to ensure a range of perspectives.</p>
<b>Online communities or panels</b>	To engage the public over a prolonged period, including to measure		✓	✓	✓				✓	Typically long term, with panel membership	Varies	Medium	Panels are a long-term commitment therefore require ongoing work to recruit participants and liaise with and

Method	Purpose and context of the engagement	Typical level of public engagement					Typical delivery mode			Time	No. of participants	Cost <sup>36</sup>	Factors to consider when planning and delivering this approach
		Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower	Face-to-face	Online	Paper/Postal				
	<p>change in views over time.</p> <p>To engage on a range of topics, including to potentially engage on future projects/initiatives that are not yet developed.</p>									up to a year or two years.			<p>manage existing panel members.</p> <p>Making clear the value of participation and the benefits of long term involvement can help encourage engagement.</p> <p>Online approaches can exclude those without access to internet and/or necessary devices. Could therefore be supplemented with other, offline, forms of engagement where appropriate.</p>

# Ipsos MORI's standards and accreditations

Ipsos MORI's standards and accreditations provide our clients with the peace of mind that they can always depend on us to deliver reliable, sustainable findings. Our focus on quality and continuous improvement means we have embedded a 'right first time' approach throughout our organisation.



## ISO 20252

This is the international market research specific standard that supersedes BS 7911/MRQSA and incorporates IQCS (Interviewer Quality Control Scheme). It covers the five stages of a Market Research project. Ipsos MORI was the first company in the world to gain this accreditation.



## ISO 27001

This is the international standard for information security designed to ensure the selection of adequate and proportionate security controls. Ipsos MORI was the first research company in the UK to be awarded this in August 2008.



## ISO 9001

This is the international general company standard with a focus on continual improvement through quality management systems. In 1994, we became one of the early adopters of the ISO 9001 business standard.



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Ipsos MORI Public Affairs works closely with national governments, local public services and the not-for-profit sector. Its c.200 research staff focus on public service and policy issues. Each has expertise in a particular part of the public sector, ensuring we have a detailed understanding of specific sectors and policy challenges. Combined with our methods and communications expertise, this helps ensure that our research makes a difference for decision makers and communities.