**CCUKDemocracy helping the Summit for Democracy to meaningfully engage citizens globally**

[Latest — Citizens' Convention on UK Democracy (ccukdemocracy.org)](https://www.ccukdemocracy.org/latest)

***September 2022***

While we await a response from the new UK Prime Minister to our renewed Proposal  for A Citizens’ Convention on UK Democracy we continue to work with partners and our networks to revitalise democracy globally.

In December 2021, many in the field of deliberative democracy were somewhat disappointed with the outcomes of the last Summit for Democracy and started what has become - with your help - a successful campaign for reform.

The Summit had no recognition of or plan for developing democracy’s greatest modern success stories - the recent wave of over 600 successful citizens’ assemblies across the planet. Deliberative democracy was not covered at all in the Cohorts [work streams] of the 2021 Summit. This is widely seen as being a missing part of the agenda. Now, after our serious but respectful campaign, change is underway. Deliberation is being highlighted and its excellent practice and innovation is being enabled to spread rapidly. It is also firing up the leadership and optimism which is needed if we are to win the battle against autocracy.

The campaign centred around two letters [see below] suggesting that citizens engagement should play a key role in revitalising modern democracy. The letters were signed by many leading figures in the field, and they are still open if you would like to add your name. We offer our thanks to all those listed in the letters who signed  and supported this successful  aspiration to be more ambitious and pro-active.

The first letter was to President Biden who had inspired the creation of the Summit and the other was to Uzra Zeya the responsible Under Secretary in the United States Government.

* We asked for deliberative democracy, especially citizens’ assemblies, to be taken seriously as a part of real all year round activity between the formal  Summits for Democracy.
* We set out the case for strengthening the work in individual nations by their having access to democratic infrastructure across the planet. This should include a global What Works evidence centre free and available to all, a global Citizens’ Assembly in permanent session to consider issues around democracy at the request of the Summit, and a global “Marshall Plan” to energise and focus activity not least in those new democracies threatened by Autocracy.
* Our most important “ask” was for the Summit to dedicate a new work stream, a Cohort for Deliberative Democracy and Citizens’ Assemblies and for it to set and achieve an agreed  global agenda.

We were delighted to receive an encouraging response from Under Secretary Zeya and, working in close cooperation with the US State Department officials, we have created the Cohort to bring  proposals on deliberation to life.

Things are moving along quickly now. A Cohort requires 2 political leads. We have approached Ireland with its innovative and pioneering track record on deliberation, and the European Commission with its vast experience in the field. This was demonstrated again recently by its Future of Europe report and the launch of the Competence centre on participatory and deliberative democracy. Ireland has accepted political leadership and the European Commission will officially reply soon. This, with the State Department, can constitute a formidable triumvirate for good.

To drive this forward a core group of Cohort NGO sponsors including the Citizens’ Convention on UK Democracy has been considering a draft agenda for the Cohort under the sponsorship of the newDemocracy foundation [Australia] led by Iain Walker. Other founding sponsors include: Prof Jane Suiter of Dublin City University (Ireland); Dawn Nakagawa of the Berggruen Institute [US]; Yves Dejaeghere of FIDE (Europe - Brussels); Claudia Chwalisz of DemocracyNext (International); Dominik Hierlemann of Bertelsmann Stiftung (Germany); Linn Davis of Healthy Democracy (US); Matt Leighninger of the National Conference on Citizenship (US); and Peter MacLeod of MASS LBP (Canada). We need many others to join this work.

We are at the beginning of the Cohort’s development and news on further progress is being circulated as it happens. As an early statement of intent, the Cohort is discussing working jointly with the Eastern European Group of Democracy R&D and other partners on a package for the new democracies under threat.

In conclusion, democracy now has the processes and technology to enable Citizens to be fully engaged with their democracy. We have a new organisation to help in this task. Setting up the Cohort is the beginning not the end. The heavy responsibility upon the new Cohort is to demonstrate its ambition and be the engine to help make deliberation happen globally.

Many friends and colleagues of CCUKDemocracy [and given the chance, citizens themselves] are ready and eager to make a constructive contribution to grab this precious opportunity to make our democracy fitter for purpose.

**We don’t have much time.**

**Graham Allen - Convenor CCUKDemocracy**

[**grahamwilliamallen@outlook.co**](mailto:Grahamwilliamallern@outlook.com)**m**

To Under Secretary Zeya - the Under Secretary of State for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights, US State Department.

Dear Under Secretary Zeya,

We are US and international practitioners, experts, academics and others in the field of deliberative democracy and citizens’ assemblies.

We know that you are as concerned as we are that our collective efforts to defend democracy against autocracy now need to go up a gear. Recent events in many countries, including the USA, are adding urgency to this. That is why the broad global span in the Open Letter to the President [see below] strongly welcome his leadership in creating and following up with specific actions on the Summit for Democracy.

There are three strategic points we are keen to convey to you:

1. **Creating a meaningful role for everyday people is the central democratic reform needed today.**

We start with the importance of citizen engagement and its meaningful inclusion as one of the pillars of democratic societies. There is a broad public sentiment that elected representatives are part of a special elite and ‘not like the rest of us’. This is now seen very acutely in the US, but is a shared problem across every free democracy.

Once citizens see no reasonable prospect of being represented (it’s an insiders’ game) or being heard (that’s for wealthy donors) we cease to see ourselves in our halls of governments. Decisions are then done ‘to’ us, and it’s easy for people to gravitate to fanciful arguments at the periphery of society.

Political parties around the world have endured decades of falling membership which makes the remaining people more and more likely to represent the polar extremes rather than a real cross-section of society. As this is unlikely to change, the solution lies in creating other opportunities whereby the regular citizens can be meaningfully and substantively heard today.

The criminal jury is a good example of a trusted decision-making mechanism. If judges find juries complementary, then done in the right way so can politicians.

Major projects utilising this approach are working. The OECD and UN Democracy Fund are championing this approach. It warrants being put on any agenda for those concerned with the erosion of public trust.

**Ireland is the story participants need to hear.**

Abortion laws is a topic which is politically difficult everywhere, and potentially about to get more difficult in the United States. Consider that Ireland (with an above average connection to religion) and with a *Constitutional* prohibition was able to reform this area using this approach.

Why did it work? Instead of politician leading the public discourse, it was 100 everyday people we can relate to who were given the task of seeing what, if any, changes they thought were necessary. Now, the public found themselves hearing from people who looked like them, had jobs like them, and had views like them – and when those people learn things which caused them to alter their views the wider community feel like they were learning with them rather than being berated into submission as we often feel with Punch and Judy politics and activist campaigns.

Hearing from experts, members of the legislature – from all parts of the spectrum – was a transformational experience for participants. Many of the citizens proposals passed through the legislature and ultimately the Irish people’s referendum passed 67 % -33%.

**It is working and spreading in almost every OECD country.**

It is fairly easy to agree on the problem. Regardless of our home country, most of us see our democracy overrun with an unholy mess of money, special interests, favours and ultimately poor decisions which aren’t seen to be helping people’s standard of living. Elections have always been combative, but the dog is now getting off the leash: while polarisation helps with the short term goal of winning and retaining office, the growing use of the approach is revealing a staggering side effect of that division living on well after the election result is known. What works to win elections has downsides, not least undermining citizens engagement and faith in their own democracy.

*The  missing piece from the first summit was how we tackle the lack of citizens’ engagement. This can be put right by integrating it from the outset into the preparations beginning for second summit.* Looking carefully at the Citizens’ Assembly method will reveal how it earns public trust and why a random sample of everyday people practising “democracy in good conditions” are transparently and obviously immune to the negative pressures. This is why Presidents, Prime Ministers and Governors around the world are commissioning citizens’ assembly projects -600 so far-so that the legislatures may concurrently solve a problem and gain an understanding of the broader usefulness of the approach.

The [evidence base](https://www.oecd.org/gov/innovative-citizen-participation-and-new-democratic-institutions-339306da-en.htm) is strong. Yet its use in America is the lowest across the OECD. Summit preparations can be the first step in letting US legislators know that this option exists.

The US has taken an important first step (NYT article [here](https://emea01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.nytimes.com%2Finteractive%2F2019%2F10%2F02%2Fupshot%2Fthese-526-voters-represent-america.html&data=04%7C01%7C%7C58c8b2a9ac6d4e9a69e908d9ea460dec%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C637798408873164626%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000&sdata=e2t3r3f0zxdXO290RTy55ePq2MkmGtl0KjAU%2BS1OJeg%3D&reserved=0) ) demonstrating the promise of citizens’ engagement. We can amplify that story and spread the potential.

We can facilitate access to the leading expertise from our willing global network designing and operating Citizens’ Assemblies and citizens’ engagement. If helpful we could explore any ideas you wish to discuss or test.

The problem is an urgent one, so the tested innovation of Citizens’ Assemblies offers the prospect of equally rapid solutions being able to emerge from a well prepared and hardworking Summit.

Please let us know how best we can take this forward perhaps by a short initial meeting with you and your team,

Best Wishes,

Nicolas Berggruen, Founder of the Berggruen Institute, co-author of Renovation Democracy, USA

Nathan Gardels, Co-Founder of the Berggruen Institute, co-author of Renovating Democracy, USA

Dawn Nakagawa, Executive Vice President of the Berggruen Institute, Director of the Future of Democracy program, USA

James Fishkin, Director, Stanford’s Center for Deliberative Democracy ,Stanford, USA

David Schecter, Coordinator, Democracy R&D network, San Francisco, USA

Mahmud Farooque, Expert and Citizen Assessment of Science and Technology (ECAST) Network, Washington, DC, USA

Anthony Jones, Vice President Gorbachev Foundation of North America, Boston, USA

Ed Chadd, Convenor of the 2021 Washington State Climate Assembly, USA

Linn Davis and the Directors of Healthy Democracy, USA

Michael Genovese, President of Global Policy Institute at LMU, Los Angeles, USA

Hélène Landemore, Professor of Political Science, Yale University, USA

Roger Berkowitz, Founder and Academic Director, Hannah Arendt Center for Politics and Humanities at Bard College, USA

Wendy Willis, Executive Director of the Deliberative Democracy Consortium, USA

Michael Neblo, Director of IDEA, lead at Connecting to Congress, USA

***International Supporters***

Kevin Keith, Chair of the UK Open Government Network

Graham Allen, Convenor of the Citizens’ Convention on UK Democracy

Kathy Jones, Director newDemocracy Australia

David Van Reybrouck, managing director G1000, author “Against Elections: The Case for Democracy”, Belgium

David Farrell, Co-convenor of the Irish Citizens’ Assembly Project

Luca Belgiorno-Nettis, Founder newDemocracy Australia

Grace Lockrobin, Founder and Managing Director of Thinking Space, UK

Ceri Davies, Director of the Centre for Deliberative Research, NatCen, UK

Lord Wallace of Saltaire, UK

Andrew Beale, 2021 Heywood Prize winner, “Integration of Citizen’s Assemblies as a formal part of UK governing structures”

Ben Rich, Chief Executive, Radix UK

Baroness Ruth Lister of Burtersett

Robert Blackburn, Professor of Constitutional Law, King’s College London

Iain Walker, Executive Director newDemocracy Australia

Baroness Frances D’Souza, former Speaker of the House of Lords

Tom Brake, Former Deputy Leader House of Commons, Director Unlock Democracy

Jane Suiter, Co-convenor of the Irish Citizens’ Assembly Project

Areeq Chowdhury, Founder of WebRoots Democracy

Bobby Duffy, Director of The Policy Institute, King’s College London

Sarah Castell, Chief Executive, Involve UK

Graham Smith, Centre for the Study of Democracy, University of Westminster

Matt Hawkins, Co-Director, Compassion in Politics UK

Laura Chinchilla, Former President of Costa Rica

Cristina Manzano, Director of EsGlobal, Spain

Jessica Feldman, Global Communications Faculty, American University in Paris, France

Judith Symonds, Paris School of International Affairs, Science Po and Common Ground, France

Lex Paulson, Executive Director, Mohammed VI University, Morocco

Lord Young of Cookham, UK

Paul Natorp, Co-founder and Chairperson of Sager der Samler, Denmark

Hans-Liudger Dienel, Berlin University of Technology and Participation, Germany

Henning Banthien, Chairman of Management, IFOK, Germany

Others continue to join

**Open letter to President Joe Biden on the Summit for Democracy**

**This updated open letter to the President is our proposal for practical global action throughout 2022 ahead of the second Summit for Democracy.**

**January 2022**

Dear Mr President,

Your brilliant vision for regular Summits on Democracy now needs to be complemented by clear outcomes. Officials need to come up in a timely way with some creative yet practical ideas to make it sing.

Here are some of those ideas – just three simple ones – from some of the best people in the field.

The opportunity of the 2022 Summit for Democracy should not be missed. It will be to democracy what COP 26 was to the environment. Yet strangely, democracy’s superpower – the rich wave of examples of effective Citizens’ Assemblies sweeping across the globe – has yet to find a place on the Summit agenda. We must give the means and not merely wish the ends.

It is vital that our democracies evolve and take up these innovative means to resist the creeping encroachment of autocracy. There are a number of immediate things that can be begun now and that can bear fruit before the December 2022 Summit.

**First**, in preparation for the Summit, officials can craft now a rhetorical declaration of support for the principles of deliberative democracy  and thoughtful citizens’ engagement.

**Second**, officials working on the 2022 Summit should be tasked to create the beginnings of a global What Works Centre for Citizens’ Assemblies to share an evidence base, promote best practise and advocate for effective Citizens’ Assemblies, building on the excellent work of the UN, OECD and many others in the field.

**Third**, the pre-Summit work can delve further into the practicalities of making available to all democracies the means, methods and outcomes of citizens’ engagement. The Summit preparation should include convening its own standing, independent International  Citizens’ Assembly to be in session through the year. It would carefully deliberate on ideas to be sent to the  regular annual Summits on Democracy. This will reveal to democrats globally that almost any policy issue can be helpfully addressed by citizens provided that trusted and effective mechanisms of deliberation and citizens’ engagement are in place.

We all have to be self-aware and understand that we have not been as assiduous as is necessary to make sure our democracies are constantly improving and adjusting to the challenges of the modern world. These Summits and the permanent institutions above are not about huddling together but about reaching out. They are just the beginning of a continuing education process for all of those of us – including our global democratic elites – who care about the future of democracy.

Meaningful citizens’ engagement is not a “nice to have”. Our ambition must be that it becomes as much a part of each of our democratic cultures as are the ballot box and the occasional right to vote.

Those in the field – many additional to those mentioned below – are able, experienced and hungry to help you make a start on this.

**Signatories:**

Graham Allen, Convenor of the Citizens’ Convention on UK Democracy

Prof David Farrell, Co-convenor of the Irish Citizens’ Assembly Project

Kathy Jones, Director newDemocracy Australia

David Van Reybrouck, managing director G1000, author “Against Elections: The Case for Democracy”, Belgium

David Schecter, Coordinator, Democracy R&D network, USA

Luca Belgiorno-Nettis, Founder newDemocracy Australia

Mahmud Farooque, Expert and Citizen Assessment of Science and Technology (ECAST) Network, Washington, DC, USA

Grace Lockrobin, Founder and Managing Director of Thinking Space

Prof Michael Genovese, President of Global Policy Institute at LMU, Los Angeles, USA

Ceri Davies, Director of the Centre for Deliberative Research, NatCen

Lord Wallace of Saltaire

Andrew Beale, 2021 Heywood Prize winner, “Integration of Citizen’s Assemblies as a formal part of UK governing structures”

Anthony Jones, Vice President Gorbachev Foundation of North America

Ben Rich, Chief Executive, Radix UK

Baroness Ruth Lister of Burtersett

Robert Blackburn, Professor of Constitutional Law, King’s College London, UK

Ed Chadd, Convenor of the 2021 Washington State Climate Assembly

Iain Walker, Executive Director newDemocracy Australia

Baroness Frances D’Souza, former Speaker of the House of Lords

Tom Brake, Former Deputy Leader House of Commons, Director Unlock Democracy

Areeq Chowdhury, Founder of WebRoots Democracy

Bobby Duffy, Director of The Policy Institute, King’s College London

Sarah Castell, CEO, Involve

Hélène Landemore, Professor of Political Science, Yale University

Prof James Fishkin, Director, Stanford’s Center for Deliberative Democracy

Prof Graham Smith, Centre for the Study of Democracy, University of Westminster

Matt Hawkins, Co-Director, Compassion in Politics

Linn Davis and the Directors of Healthy Democracy, USA

Lord Young of Cookham, UK

Paul Natorp, Co-founder and Chairperson of Sager der Samler, Denmark

Hans-Liudger Dienel, Berlin University of Technology and Participation, Germany

Henning Banthien, Chairman of Management, IFOK, Germany

**House of Lords Constitution Committee Inquiry into the Future Governance of the UK:** Evidence from CCUKDemocracy and others calling for meaningful citizen engagement

All the written evidence to the inquiry can be accessed on the Constitution Committee website by clicking [here](https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/172/constitution-committee/publications/written-evidence/). Much of the evidence was from deliberative democrats on the need for meaningful citizens’ engagement in our democracy. A selection of the evidence can also be read below.

CCUKDemocracy evidence: April 2021

The Citizens’ Convention on UK Democracy. Evidence to the Lords Committee on the Constitution from the Citizens’ Convention on UK Democracy.

*Summary*

1.First, many congratulations to the Lords Constitution Committee on setting up the inquiry to examine the Future Governance of the UK. It is much needed.

UK citizens are losing faith in democracy. To review our Governance without listening to our citizens is unthinkable. Giving them a meaningful say in its future is the only guarantee of its continuance. Our note shows how this can be done.

2. Right at the outset we hope that the Committee will frame a road map which citizens and then HMG can consider and act upon. Above all, this requires a clear focus on HOW these issues are taken forward rather than an extended and divisive debate on WHAT should be taken forward in yet another wish-list of reforms with no political end game. Debates on our democracy do not lack bright ideas for reform, but hitherto they have lacked the vehicle or process by which broadly-supported decisions can be achieved.

3. Hence, our evidence offers the keys to a PROCESS rather than pre-determining what the POLICY outcomes ought to be. The main process uses Deliberative Democracy and especially how we can *meaningfully engage citizens in this project by the use of independent Citizens’ Assemblies.* This is our field of expertise. Our evidence is limited to exploring that.

In addition to links to more detail in the text ([www.ccukdemocracy.org](http://www.ccukdemocracy.org/)), we would appreciate the possibility of explaining in oral evidence to you the concepts of this approach.

4. We hope you will consider setting out at the outset three clear landmarks along the following lines:

*(1).The Committee declares a statement of principle that as part of the Committee’s work, it believes****ordinary UK citizens should be enabled to engage with policy proposals on future governance,****which is best done by the creation of a non-partisan Citizens’ Assembly of independently selected people - a microcosm of the United Kingdom. In addition, that the Assembly shall deliberate on a remit drafted by the Lords Committee, agreed and amended after discussion with HMG and with a commitment from both that the work produced by citizens will be seriously and respectfully considered. This would add a solid and legitimising input of citizens’ views to the foundation of the Committee’s work.*

*(2).The Committee’s heaviest logistical burden will be on content. It will no doubt have a lengthy list of policy proposals that emerge from the consideration of its extensive terms of reference.**Where the Committee feel it is appropriate, some proposals may then be flagged up for consideration by the Assembly or HMG. Each policy proposal should receive an initial annotated response from HMG.* ***We suggest this is then published as the Lords Interim Report.****As an independent and impartial body concerned with process, the CCUKDemocracy will not be giving any evidence or views on any policy questions.*

*(3).The Committee should state that****the Committee shall convene******a Citizens’ Assembly on completion of the Lords Interim Report****. The Assembly will receive the Interim Report as annotated by HMG and consider it. Consideration would take place within an agreed period [perhaps 8-12 weeks] using a blend of online and traditional deliberative forms and then produce a series of recommendations.****The citizens’ recommendations shall then be returned to both the Lords Committee and HMG for consideration, then acceptance, rejection or amendment in the normal way****.*

These three statements will publicly set out *the means* to realise a process which includes Parliament, Government and Citizens. Constructed in this way, it will be able to heal our democracy, arrive at thoughtful, practical and consensual proposals with each key partner respectfully engaged, yet maintain and strengthen the rightful electoral legitimacy of HMG and Parliament to make the final decisions.

5. As we evidence later, Citizens’ Assemblies are increasingly commonplace across the globe and have delivered common sense ways forward on some of the most difficult issues faced by policy makers who, acting alone, are increasingly hamstrung by polarisation and division. The recent Irish Assembly’s resolution of the abortion issue ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MjpuDk9\_BWI](https://emea01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.youtube.com%2Fwatch%3Fv%3DMjpuDk9_BWI&data=04%7C01%7C%7C1d0eb7ae9b5046e6d34908d8f8d54a85%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C637532942246880129%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=FOt6nklkQEm38lVex0NKUcVTm8z91dkDabJpQHaE%2BsE%3D&reserved=0)) is just one of many examples.

*6. The Lords already enjoys a reputation for a greater degree of independent thought and record of innovation than does the Commons. This would be strengthened further by the inclusion and legitimacy of citizens engagement in this process.* The very act of a Lords Committee commissioning a Citizens’ Assembly to appropriately assist in its work would itself symbolise an evolution in our democracy and the renewal of the partnership between citizens and Parliament.

Practicalities

7. On announcement of your inquiry, we offered to help begin your process with a Citizens’ Assembly. Now your work is underway, we renew that offer to take effect immediately upon completion of your interim report. We have the network to design and manage this process in whatever way you wish. We - or whoever is asked to complete this work - should seek to engage the committed and knowledgeable national and global expertise in the field. You will have seen how six select committees in the Commons came together to fund and produce a report on climate change. A similar but more nimble process might be of value to you here. The objective is to offer the independent and impartial expertise to design and deliver the mechanism of a Citizens’ Assembly to report to you. Were it to be helpful, we would also be open to discussions on how to secure additional funding to undertake such an exercise should it be needed.

Background

8. Your call to examine the Future of Governance of the UK has chimed not only with your colleagues in the Lords but fellow believers in democracy across the UK. From London to Washington and everywhere in the world family of democracies, legislatures need to show leadership and clarity on how we make our democratic systems ready for a sustainable future; to do that without our citizens would be a fatal flaw. We focus our evidence exclusively on what we feel is the most practical way to help achieve that.  
  
Democracy is about the reconciliation of views. The deliberate separation of powers and of parties rightly formalises and sets up a permanent structure of conflict. This tension is then constantly reconciled through humane political processes. However, in recent years we have begun to take that process for granted and failed to evolve it to be fit for the modern age. Your Inquiry offers a chance to exemplify how we can start to put that right.  
  
All too often, oppositionism has been the default position of traditional politics when difficult problems have arisen. It is so much easier to dig into your comfort zone and say “No” rather than to engage with political opponents. However, there is a way forward. That is, to upgrade our sometimes threadbare methods by putting to work a new, innovative kid on the democratic block - Deliberative Democracy.  
  
Ahead of any immutable political postures being struck, we can meaningfully engage citizens themselves using Deliberative Democracy to express thoughtful, practical answers and recommendations in whatever areas you and HMG feel appropriate. We seem often to be rich with brilliant policy solutions but paupers in having effective processes to move them forward. Our citizens have one great quality that legislators can never have: their views would not be forged in the distorting heat of the daily political and media inferno. Legislators are the quickest to acknowledge this. They understand it is much easier for each party to accept as the basis for debate and legislative action the considered views gifted willingly by thoughtful citizens rather than “give in” to the views of their political opponents.  
  
Deliberative Democracy is where a microcosm of a nation - impartially and scientifically selected - request views from experts and are facilitated by independent professionals to conduct mature, respectful democracy. There is now a vast amount of global experience and strong evidence on what works to do this well and in so doing, successfully resolve some of the most difficult issues in politics. The most competent and distinguished practitioners of Deliberative Democracy in the UK and across the planet would happily assist in this work at your request. The UK and its Mother of Parliaments can once again lead global democracy not rhetorically but with relevant practise. This time, the prize is to take democracy forward to its next evolution: the meaningful engagement of citizens in support of their elected representatives.  
  
Winston Churchill once said “Democracy is the worst form of Government except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time”. Even before the polarisation of Brexit, the US Capitol Insurrection, the growth of autocracy and the coarsening of political discourse, those of us who, regardless of political affiliation, call ourselves democrats worried about keeping that system viable - the least “worst” it can be. Now our global democracy feels fragile and poorly maintained. If it is to have a strong long-term future, it now needs some serious love and attention. My Lords, your promise to examine the future governance of the UK presents the perfect opportunity to do just that and not only produce another report but negotiate and deliver a serious practical outcome.  
  
If we want to renew democracy, then people of good will from all political backgrounds have to work up some persuasive ideas and arguments. Above all, we must remake anew an effective partnership between a disenchanted public and a political class that often struggles to connect with them. In a sometimes depressing picture of national and international democracy, Deliberative Democracy is a growing glimmer of hope and oddly it has a pedigree going back to ancient Greece.  
  
The optimism here for democrats of all persuasions is based upon the recognition that elections alone are no longer enough and like the ancient Greeks, using Deliberative Democracy to re-engage citizens thoughtfully with their politics is an important way to restore trust and participation. This would not only halt the decline of faith in democracy but also take it to its next evolution, a cultural development as significant and socially-uniting as was “Votes for All”, the last great democratic leap forward.  
  
It is time to renew our democracy on a sustainable basis led by your example, engaging with Parliamentarians and making it strong enough to transcend the complacency, elitism and populism that still threatens its very existence. The Executive and Legislature can and must feel supported and refreshed by the change, not frightened or undermined by it. By agreeing in advance each step of the process as we propose, existing institutions can be completely confident that deliberation is a welcome improvement to our democracy, not a threatening alternative to it. Citizens and Parliamentarians can then work together to play our parts as sensible and constructive partners. Surely the moment has come. As Hillel is reputed to have said “If not now, when? If not me, who?”.  
  
Deliberative Democracy is tasty and nourishing slow-cooked politics, the antithesis of our present fast food McPolitics. Deliberation by a microcosm of the nation, region or locality can propose recommendations for consideration by legislatures. In essence, a group of perhaps 80 or so citizens, transparently and scientifically selected, come together to conduct - in the words of Deliberative Democracy guru James Fishkin - “democracy in good conditions”. They are properly looked after, travel costs paid, even a small honorarium of thanks and a decent hotel for however many weekend days this civic duty takes them. Perhaps most importantly, citizens don't bring the baggage and prejudices of political parties with them. A point is made to discuss issues respectfully and with good manners with the 7 or 8 people on your table, a mind-opening counterpoint to the bad manners and febrile distortion of frustrated politicians and media pundits.  
  
Deliberative Democracy is not a theory: it is actually working, producing outcomes and gaining traction in the UK and across the globe. It is being done to the highest standards as the OECD’s “[Catching the Deliberative Wave](https://emea01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.oecd.org%2Fgov%2Fopen-government%2Finnovative-citizen-participation-new-democratic-institutions-catching-the-deliberative-wave-highlights.pdf&data=04%7C01%7C%7C1d0eb7ae9b5046e6d34908d8f8d54a85%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C637532942246880129%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=L0aap9NKSNXUhddptZ9przLEt5hatB55YMZ6CTcW6J0%3D&reserved=0)” highlights. The citizen deliberators - “everyday people” like us – are, with balanced briefing and professional facilitation, perfectly able to take forward issues found to be intractable to usual political processes. “Give us your toughest problem” is the challenge from deliberators. There is now a global critical mass of evidence to reference and to use (and perhaps one day soon, to consolidate globally into a UK style *What Works* organisation)**.**

Hundreds of democratic deliberations are now underway or successfully completed on the most “unresolvable” issues. For example, on abortion in Ireland, nuclear power in South Korea, energy policy in Texas, social care in Northern Ireland, waste recycling in South Australia, the Grand Debate in France and the UK Parliament’s Climate Change Assembly. Finally, deliberators hand their finished gift to their legislators to do their part: consideration, amendment and decision. Hitherto, these elected or appointed representatives have felt trapped by whips, tribal party loyalties, electoral short-termism, the media frenzy, lobbyists and campaign money to the extent that they are often unable to progress issues. Hence, far from feeling squeezed out or undermined, legislators actually welcome the new democratic deep-clean of deliberation to unblock our often-sclerotic political processes and co-exist on *citizen-created common ground*. They see that renewing a mutually respectful pre-legislative partnership with citizens strengthens them to get the job done that we expect them to do. Perhaps one day - citing this pioneering work of the Lords Constitution Committee - every Bill going through Parliament will have first been informed by thoughtful citizens’ engagement.

Using traditional face to face methods and the latest online techniques, such as automated Artificial Intelligence facilitation, we can back up our groups of 80 citizens by engaging with countless numbers of “everyday people” - founding mothers and fathers in a national conversation on the key issues put before them. Recently we put a Proposal for a process like this to the UK Prime Minister, ([The Proposal — Citizens' Convention on UK Democracy (ccukdemocracy.org)](https://www.ccukdemocracy.org/proposal)). We and colleagues in the field would be honoured to adapt it for use as the Citizens’ Assembly for the Lords Committee as part of the underpinning of the democratic evolution of the UK.  
  
This independent process means that the initial recommendations will be citizens’ proposals, not ours - or with respect - even yours, let alone those of our favourite pressure group or most generous vested interest. They will ultimately be formally handed to the Lords Committee, our Parliament and Government for the final consideration and decision that their and your mandate deserves. Through this process, every citizen can feel ownership and involvement in their democracy between elections, just as they feel supportive of our existing Jury system even if they personally have yet to serve. Over 2,000 years ago, one of the founders of the first wave of democracy, Pericles, remarked “We are unique in considering the man who takes no part in public affairs not to be apolitical, but useless”. It is now time for us to take up and use the means by which we grow from being a useless spectator to each of us taking our part as a player on the democratic field.  
  
9. We are right to test and question this new-fangled Deliberative Democracy, but you will be pleased to discover that much like elections, its rediscovered twin - deliberation - is a process with deep roots back to the ancient Greeks. It is not politics like we used to do, it is politics better than we have been doing and to which every democratic society worthy of the name should aspire.

10. We look forward to speaking with you if you feel able to invite us in.

Best wishes,

**Board members and Associates of The Citizens’ Convention on UK Democracy**

Ceri Davies. Director of the Centre for Deliberative Democracy, National Centre for Social Research

Graham Allen. Convenor, The Citizens Convention on UK Democracy

Robert Blackburn. Professor of Constitutional Law, King’s College London

Kathy Jones. Director newDemocracy Australia

Andrew Blick. Head of the Department of Political Economy, King’s College London

David van Reybrouck. Co-Director G1000, Belgium.

David Halpern. Director, Behavioural Insights Unit

Matthew Taylor. Chief Executive, The RSA [in a personal capacity]

David Farrell. Chair of Politics, University College Dublin

Peter MacLeod. Principal, MASS LBP Canada

John Curtice. Professor of Politics, University of Strathclyde

Jane Suiter. Director, Institute for Future Media, Democracy and Society, Dublin

And others.

**Evidence from 9 others.**

1.Evidence from Southampton University-Citizens’ Assemblies in the UK -the story so far.

A submission from the recent study of UK evidence of effective Citizens Assemblies, which can be downloaded by clicking [here](https://www.ccukdemocracy.org/s/HoL-Inquiry-submission.docx).

2. The All Party Group on Deliberative Democracy

UK Parliamentarians working together across the political divides:

‘Dear Chair/Baroness Taylor,

We very warmly welcome the  decision of the Lords Constitution Committee to begin an inquiry on the Future Governance of the UK. We are sure that you are as concerned as we are that such an excellent initiative does not miss the opportunity to go beyond the usual suspects and reaches out to include members of the public in a manageable and organised way.

 You will no doubt receive considerable evidence from those in the field on how best to do this. For our part as a Parliamentary All Party Group on Deliberative Democracy-other than offering connections to our extensive lists of experts and practitioners- we would merely urge you from both Houses and all parties to take this opportunity to look at how the use of deliberative democracy can assist the work of the Committee.

 Specifically we would bring to your attention and commend to you the use of a Citizens’ Assembly in your inquiry. These have been a way in which the public can interface with difficult issues not on the basis of binary choices and yes/no  social media reaction but by thoughtful, considered discussions without prejudice to assist political decisions.

We would be grateful if your Committee would look at how this strongly evidenced method might play a serious part in supporting your important inquiry as it progresses.

Yours sincerely,

Alex Norris MP, Chair of the APPG on Deliberative Democracy.

David Davies MP, Former Conservative Secretary of State.

Sir Edward Davey MP, Leader Parliamentary Liberal Democrat Party.

Caroline Lucas MP, Leader Parliamentary Green Party.

Cat Smith MP, Spokesperson on Democracy. Labour.

Ben Lake MP, Spokesperson on the Constitution Plaid. Cymru

Lord George Young.

Baroness Natalie Bennett.

Lord Paul Tyler.

Baroness Ruth Lister

Lord David Puttnam .

Lord William Wallace.’

Many other Parliamentarians from across all parties and both Houses have also indicated support.

3. The OECD

An impartial apolitical distillation of the key principles of citizens engagement from the evidence of  300 global examples of deliberative democracy.

Many congratulations on establishing such an important and demanding inquiry. Given the nature of such a significant topic and its implications for all UK citizens, please have with our compliments the attached PDF copy of the OECD’s comprehensive study that provides evidence of almost 300 examples of public authorities involving citizens in complex public decisions: [*Innovative Citizen Participation and New Democratic Institutions: Catching the Deliberative Wave*](https://emea01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.oecd.org%2Fgov%2Finnovative-citizen-participation-and-new-democratic-institutions-339306da-en.htm&data=04%7C01%7C%7Cd86ab0e5f9b143f3a7c208d90499fb45%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C637545882750483200%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=M4xs%2Fbmi9nnv%2FShYxixw0vsav%2BXXKAKQ2ljNDNSZ7Q0%3D&reserved=0) (2020). The report focuses on deliberative processes, like Citizens’ Assemblies and Panels, which bring together a broad cross-section of society to hear evidence, deliberate, and formulate collective, informed recommendations for policy makers. These processes are particularly helpful to decision makers on questions that concern values, on complex problems that require trade-offs, and on long-term decisions – all three characteristics being present in the issue of a nation’s future governance.

We hope this OECD evidence might aid your considerations of how to involve citizens in a way that would be meaningful and would result in citizens’ informed contributions. As the lead author of this report, I would be happy to be called to give evidence or to answer any questions if that would be helpful.

Best wishes,

Claudia Chwalisz

Policy Analyst, Leading work on innovative citizen participation

Open Government Unit

Open and Innovative Government Division

4. The Royal Society of Arts

How deliberative democracy enriches and strengthens existing representative democracy. The RSA submission can be downloaded by clicking [here](https://www.ccukdemocracy.org/s/RSA-Submission-to-the-House-of-Lords-Constitutional-Committee.docx).

5. newDemocracy Australia

The view from one of the foremost global practitioners having delivered 25 deliberation projects and are now contracted with the UN Democracy Fund to deliver more. The newDemocracy Australia submission can be downloaded by clicking [here](https://www.ccukdemocracy.org/s/newDemocracy-submission-Inquiry-into-The-Future-Governance-of-the-UK_Apr21.docx).

6. The Irish Assembly

Evidence from its creators on how the Irish Citizens’ Assembly created consensus and healing on some of Ireland’s “intractable” problems. Download [here](https://www.ccukdemocracy.org/s/Reimagining-democracy-in-Ireland-April-2021.docx).

7.Prof James Fishkin.

Evidence from one of the doyens of deliberative democracy, who explains in the New York Times how “America in one room” operates:

[https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/02/opinion/america-one-room-experiment.html](https://emea01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.nytimes.com%2F2019%2F10%2F02%2Fopinion%2Famerica-one-room-experiment.html&data=04%7C01%7C%7Cd86ab0e5f9b143f3a7c208d90499fb45%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C637545882750488195%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=HurgNl%2B7RbPqjwTPDxYxc%2Fx9S7w3iAv59vdZoKvn2vw%3D&reserved=0)

8. National Centre for Social Research.

Evidence from NatCen on their work on hearing the wider public voice:

‘NatCen read with interest the call for evidence the Lords Constitution Committee has made to support its inquiry into Future Governance of the UK.  As the Committee will appreciate, this inquiry comes at a crucial time for democracy and represents a golden opportunity to ensure the voices of citizens themselves can also be heard in an organised and meaningful way.   Principles fundamental to forms of participatory and deliberative democracy offer a useful roadmap here which we believe has an important role to play alongside our representative systems and rights.

Alongside the wide range of evidence the Committee will consider, we therefore add our voice to those advocating for citizen engagement to inform the work of the inquiry and in particular through the use of Citizen’s Assemblies or other form of mini-public; giving citizens across the UK an opportunity to learn about the issues under consideration, trusting them to have their say and giving you access to new opinions and perspectives on the issues and solutions available.

Our full submission to follow shares more detail of our own work in this landscape – and one national project in particular we hope might be of interest in illustrating the place and potential of citizen engagement on questions of governance.  With Professor Sir John Curtice we have successfully used a mini-public model to engage over 380 members of the public (selected to be representative of the UK as a whole) to consider policy choices for Britain after leaving the EU.   In particular, we have expertise at designing and delivering these events online, enabling large scale participation and there are other promising developments in this field that would enable a broader national conversation that can ensure that anybody who wants to can participate.   We are leading innovation in this area and working alongside global leaders including Prof Jim Fishkin at Stanford University who are trialling the use of AI to support the scaling up of public deliberation.

We would be pleased to be available to the Lords Committee through further evidence or via a personal briefing to expand on any of these suggestions and the practicalities of achieving dialogue-based engagement between citizens and parliament as part of your important work.

**Ceri Davies**  
Director of the Centre for Deliberative Research  
NatCen - Social Research that works for society’

9. Pew Research

Pew finds three quarters of people say it is important for the Government to create Citizens’ Assemblies.

<https://www.pewresearch.org/global/?p=49158>