

A PROPOSAL TO HMG FOR CITIZENS' ENGAGEMENT IN THE
COMMISSION FOR THE CONSTITUTION, DEMOCRACY & RIGHTS

A CITIZENS' CONVENTION ON UK DEMOCRACY



Produced by The Citizens'
Convention On UK Democracy

www.ccukdemocracy.org

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“Deliberative democracy is ‘Democracy when people are thinking under good conditions’. They are offering reasons, listening to the reasons offered by others, listening to the evidence and coming to considered judgments. It is democracy at its best and we need nothing less.”

PROF JAMES FISHKIN

The Center for Deliberative Democracy, Stanford University



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

"We are writing to support the idea that there should be an independent and impartial deliberative process – a Citizens' Convention – by which the citizens of the United Kingdom should be formally involved in giving their views to The Commission on the Constitution, Democracy and Rights. All the UK parties committed in their respective election manifestos to some sort of review of our democracy. The agenda for The Citizens' Convention and The Commission should respect the election mandate. Given the impact of the Coronavirus this engagement will necessarily be largely online. We hope all political parties will support such a Citizens' Convention however we underline that it must be established at arm's length from political parties to guarantee its independence. It should be inclusive of opinion across society and produce a report to The Commission which is the subject of unprecedented levels of public participation. Regardless of party allegiance we feel the time is right for an urgent and comprehensive look at our democracy and believe the threats of political disenchantment, cynicism and disaffiliation must be tackled swiftly."



Caroline Lucas MP
Leader, Parliamentary Green Party



Cat Smith MP
Labour shadow Minister of State
for the Cabinet Office



David Davis MP
Former Secretary of State,
Conservative



Sir Edward Davey MP
Leader, Parliamentary Liberal
Democrat Party

MANIFESTOS

ALL UK-WIDE PARLIAMENTARY PARTIES NOW SUPPORT A LOOK AT OUR DEMOCRACY. HERE'S WHAT THEY SAY...



THE CONSERVATIVES

“(There exists a) destabilising and potentially extremely damaging rift between politicians and people... We also need to look at the broader aspects of our constitution: the relationship between the Government, Parliament and the courts; the functioning of the Royal Prerogative; the role of the House of Lords; and access to justice for ordinary people... In our first year we will set up a Constitution, Democracy & Rights Commission that will examine these issues in depth, and come up with proposals to restore trust in our institutions and democracy”.



THE LABOUR PARTY

“We want our political institutions to be connected fully to the wider electorate, and will take urgent steps to refresh our democracy.” It proposes... “The renewal of our Parliament subject to recommendations made by a UK-wide Constitutional Convention, led by a Citizens’ Assembly. This Convention will answer crucial questions on how power is distributed to the UK today, how nations and regions can best relate to each other and how a Labour Government can best put power in the hands of the people.”

THE LIBERAL DEMOCRATS

“A well-functioning democracy should have a high standard of public debate in which: citizens are supported, educated and empowered to distinguish between facts and lies... However, these foundations of our democratic way of life are under threat. We will... establish UK and local Citizens’ Assemblies to ensure that the public are fully engaged in finding solutions to the greatest challenges we face.”

THE GREEN PARTY

We will “Back a Citizens’ Convention and Citizens’ Assemblies to examine further ways to strengthen democracy, including developing a written People’s Constitution and Bill of Rights, and ensure the proposals come before Parliament. This will enshrine genuine democracy at the core of our political system, making sure that ultimate power will always rest with the people”.

MOVING FORWARD

“A Constitution, Democracy and Rights Commission will be established to examine the broader aspects of the constitution and to develop proposals to restore trust in our institutions and in how our democracy operates. Careful consideration is needed on the composition and focus of The Commission and further announcements will be made in due course”.

**THE PRIME MINISTER
AT THE PRIME MINISTER’S QUESTIONS
12 January 2020**

“The one thing we want to achieve from this exercise is a set of recommendations that command public confidence. That means a wide range of engagement by The Commission when it is formed and a feeling on the part of the public and, indeed, civil society as a whole, that they are engaged with, and sympathetic to, the outcome”.

**EARL HOWE,
DEPUTY LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS
AT QUESTIONS IN THE LORDS
29 January 2020**



INTRODUCTION

At the 2019 general election, the four UK-wide parties represented in Parliament all committed to some form of review of our democracy. The Government has since committed to create a Commission on the Constitution, Democracy and Rights (The Commission).

This prospectus is a proposal from The Citizens' Convention on UK Democracy (the CCUKD) for consideration and amendment by the Government on the way in which every UK citizen can rightfully and constructively play their part in this historic review. The CCUKD is an independent non-party group whose objective is to enable thoughtful, independent citizen participation by using the techniques of deliberative democracy including – in this time of pandemic – online tools where appropriate. Meaningful and respectful engagement in a modern democracy means more than a weary call to write in. This is how we can do better.

Part 1 of this Proposal makes the case for citizens' engagement in The Commission process facilitated by an independent Citizens' Convention on UK Democracy.

Part 2 outlines how citizens' engagement using deliberative democracy would work including

suggesting which issues it would and would not address, who will take part and how they will be selected, what the stages and features of the engagement will be, what principles it needs to fulfil and how it will be widely communicated.

Part 3 looks at how the process of The Citizens' Convention will be overseen including its reporting, governance and accounting.

This proposal has evolved through several iterations over the last 18 months in order to respond to significant events and changing circumstances. It has been supported by generous grants from among others the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust and Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust.

We are especially grateful for the political support of leaders and senior members of all parties and the impartial national and international experts on deliberation who continue to advise us.

This latest incarnation of our thinking meets both the citizens' and the Government's need for practical action to strengthen the partnership between our people, their elected representatives and their democracy. We have reshaped our proposal to create an impartial vehicle through which Government and people can seize this opportunity.

We dedicate this proposal to our citizens and elected representatives. Now let them play their part together in renewing our democracy.

GRAHAM ALLEN

Convener of the
CCUKD

DR ANDREW BLICK

Project Director of the CCUKD
& Director, Centre for British
Politics and Government,
King's College London

DR CERI DAVIES

Director, Centre for Deliberative Research,
National Centre for Social Research

KATHY JONES & IAIN WALKER

Directors of the
newDemocracy Foundation

www.ccukdemocracy.org



Part I

**WHY DO WE NEED
CITIZENS TO DELIBERATE
ON DEMOCRACY?**



I. The Challenge

The commitment of the four main UK parties to review our democracy is a welcome response to the challenge facing UK democracy.

Democratic institutions in the UK – as well as around the world – have struggled to respond to profound changes in our society. In return, the public are feeling disconnected from decision-making and cynical about the values and motivations of decision-makers. The Hansard Society’s annual Audit of Political Engagement found that:

1. **72% say the system of governing needs ‘quite a lot’ or ‘a great deal’ of improvement;**
2. **63% think Britain’s system of Government is rigged to the advantage of the rich and powerful;**
3. **54% say Britain needs a strong leader who is willing to break the rules;**
4. **47% feel they have no influence at all over national decision-making; and,**
5. **Of a list of 13 political activities, the number of people saying they would be prepared to do ‘none’ is up 10 percentage points in a year to 22%.**

This is a dangerous position for democracy. If our political institutions lose their authority, people will cease engaging with them and/or seek answers elsewhere. We have already seen a worrying rise in populist and extremist ideologies. The response cannot be hankering to return to some golden age, but to renew our democracy to be fit for purpose and to inspire and engage large numbers of people across the country.

Our elected representatives cannot rebuild our democratic system alone – the public are an essential part of the

process. We can facilitate the reform agenda, driven by a new partnership between citizens and their democratic institutions and restore trust in our democratic values.

II. The Response

Since 2015, The Citizens’ Convention on UK Democracy has learnt from the best examples around the world and has worked to forge a new partnership between our elected representatives and the people, to ensure our democracy becomes effective and sustainable once again.

Initially, after a year’s careful preparation in 2019, we proposed a UK-wide Citizens’ Convention on UK Democracy to:

- Develop a widespread public conversation about the changes needed, which is facilitated in a respectful and deliberative way, making use of evidence, listening to and uniting the differing interests and perspectives in our society;
- Develop a set of recommendations for reform, reached through a fair and rigorous process, which have widespread support from both the public and elected representatives.

A unique feature of this project is that it has always had support from a core cross-party group of senior MPs. We have sought the support of representatives of all parties; and participation remains open to all parties currently represented in the UK Parliament.

These objectives remain the same today, however we have evolved our initial proposals to move quickly to take account of the manifesto commitments 2019, HMG’s consequent proposal for a commission, and the need to use online methods to overcome the challenges posed by the pandemic.



In updating their commitment to the concept of this project, our core group of party leaders and senior parliamentarians are supporting this approach to strengthen democracy well into the future:

“We are writing to support the idea that there should be an independent and impartial deliberative process – a Citizens’ Convention – by which the citizens of the United Kingdom should be formally involved in giving their views to The Commission on the Constitution, Democracy and Rights. All the UK parties committed in their respective election manifestos to some sort of review of our democracy. The agenda for The Citizens’ Convention and The Commission should respect the election mandate. Given the impact of the Coronavirus, this engagement will necessarily be largely online. We hope all political parties will support such a Citizens’ Convention, however we

underline that it must be established at arm’s length from political parties to guarantee its independence. It should be inclusive of opinion across society and produce a report to The Commission which is the subject of unprecedented levels of public participation. Regardless of party allegiance, we feel the time is right for an urgent and comprehensive look at our democracy and believe the threats of political disenchantment, cynicism and disaffiliation must be tackled swiftly.”

This general commitment is not intended to imply agreement to every dot and comma in this proposal. We continue to agree with the set of five core democratic themes that we have had since 2015 that serve as the basis for discussion with HMG as part of the process, alongside other matters of democratic importance that the process of engagement with citizens may identify (see Part 2).

The Citizens’ Convention on UK Democracy, if requested by HMG or The Commission, will fulfil this mandate by initiating a three-part Citizens’ Convention. First, a **UK-wide National Conversation** the conversation on an agreed agenda on the state of our democracy and governing institutions. Next, this will feed into the deliberative **Themed Assemblies** which will arrive at a set of robust recommendations for reform. Finally, a brief **UK Citizens’ Summit** (The Summit) will meet, collate and then report to the Commission with a concrete and achievable set of proposals developed through the engagement of the UK public. The Commission, Parliament and Government will have the final say.

Above all carrying out this process will be a massive restoration of the concept and practice of civic duty within our democracy.

**WE CANNOT
HONESTLY RENEW
OUR DEMOCRACY IF
WE DO NOT FULLY
ENGAGE AND TRUST
THE PEOPLE TO PLAY
A PRACTICAL AND
SERIOUS ROLE**

III. The Outcome

We will agree a timetable for the Conventions' activity with HMG and The Commission. **Obviously, the more time negotiated for deliberation the higher the quality of the outcomes.** We hope to stimulate a deep debate on the future of UK democracy that will give citizens a sense of ownership and investment in the process. We see this as the beginning not the end of the process of renewal. A successful Citizens' Convention may be asked to look at further themes. It will also serve as an example to stimulate further such processes, to entrench a culture of deliberation that will become a permanent feature of our democratic decision-making.

The process must arrive at a set of clear and specific recommendations to which our elected representatives can clearly respond. Broad statements and ambiguous discussions that have no clear outcomes will risk creating further disillusionment and irreparable damage to the cause of deliberation as a way of improving our democracy.

The CCUKD will, if asked, be wholly responsible for the operational side of the The Citizens' Convention and independent of the Commission and Government whose job it is to decide upon the recommendations. The Citizens' Convention will produce concrete outputs in the form of its final report and recommendations to The Commission. The Citizens' Convention has the capacity and the expertise to enable this complete final report to be accompanied by draft legislation that could be used or adapted by The Commission, elected representatives in Parliament and HMG to implement the key recommendations of The Citizens' Convention.

The proceedings of The Citizens' Convention will also produce broader social and political benefits.

Through the UK-wide National Conversation, it will increase awareness of what can be done to improve UK democracy at all levels, by both Government and citizens.

It will give citizens a working example of conducting "democracy in good conditions" which reaches across the UK and those citizens who feel the most disaffected, who might be inspired to participate in future political deliberation and conversation. It will produce UK evidence to underline the growing wave of global experience that citizens' engagement can inform decision-making and demonstrate the benefits of deliberative process.

By operating a positive and productive process, The Citizens' Convention will reassure Government and legislature that citizens can be wise and thoughtful partners. This could open up the possibility of introducing standing arrangements for citizens' conventions at local, UK, Parliamentary and Governmental levels, as is being demonstrated in other countries.

Among the participants, it will cohere a group of powerful ambassadors for participatory democracy and new approaches. Informed by their experiences, they will be able to spread the word into their networks and communities in order to act as advocates for further deliberations.

Finally, it is our intention that with Government and Parliament as our partners, the development of this process document and the running of the process itself will enhance understanding and deliberative democracy citizen participation in the UK. It will increase the skills of those who are involved as designers, participants or facilitators and add the missing process and technique to help re-engage citizens in contributing to their democracy.

A teal-tinted photograph of a busy indoor event space. In the foreground, a person is seated at a desk with a laptop. In the background, several people are standing and talking, and another person is seated at a desk with a laptop. The ceiling features a grid of metal trusses. The overall atmosphere is one of a professional or academic gathering.

Part II

**HOW THE CITIZENS'
CONVENTION
WOULD WORK**



I. What will The Citizens' Convention consider?

The remit of The Citizens' Convention is crucial to its success. It must:

1. Be within a workable framework accepted and welcomed by Government, Parliament, The Commission and citizens;
2. Be framed in an accessible way that makes citizens want to engage, and allow citizens space to interpret and explore the topics as they see fit;
3. Be defined enough for The Citizens' Convention to consider the issues in sufficient depth and arrive at recommendations. Time constraints mean that not every democratic issue can be dealt with but a significant start will be made.

Crucially, the remit must allow The Citizens' Convention to be free from political interference, while arriving at a set of clear and specific recommendations to which our elected representatives can clearly respond.

We are not starting with a blank sheet of paper. From 2015 onwards, our conversations with elected representatives and our consideration of the democratic questions at stake led us to agree that there are a number of key democratic issues where citizens, working through The Citizens' Convention, could begin to make a contribution to breaking the logjam. The issues for negotiation include, but are not limited to:

1. Reviewing the powers and membership of the second chamber
2. Examining the voting system at Parliamentary and local level to encourage greater participation in public life
3. Reviewing the relationship between central and local Government, and the question of devolution for England

4. Proposing how politics should be funded
5. Examining the legal recognition given to some constitutional provisions, including individual rights
6. Such other relevant democratic issues that may be recommended by The Convention as its work progresses.

Each of these 6 questions should be discussed with the Government and Commission so that we proceed by consensus. We are well aware of the explicit commitments in the governing party's manifesto not only to set up a Commission but also to retain the First Past the Post voting system. We also note the creation of the Inquiry into Judicial Review. Government will find it easier to establish and agree the proceedings of an independent Citizens' Convention if it is at ease with this first set of questions.

Other issues will arise as the work progresses. These should be considered for inclusion or for a second or future rounds of citizens' engagement should HMG and The Commission agree.

Circumstances have evolved our thinking. A tighter timetable, the Party Manifestos' commitments and the impact of the pandemic have all to be taken into account. The tighter timetable will allow little time for lengthy pre-debates. However, if The Citizens' Convention is a success and trusted by all involved, there is no reason why it could not become a standard part of the UK's democratic processes both inside and outside of Parliament.

CITIZENS' ENGAGEMENT WHEN PROPERLY AGREED AND STRUCTURED IS NOT A THREAT BUT A COMPLEMENT TO THE WORK OF THE REPRESENTATIVES THAT WE ELECT TO PARLIAMENT AND GOVERNMENT. IT IS THE BREATHING SPACE THEY ARE SO OFTEN DENIED THEMSELVES

II. What would The Citizens' Convention not consider?

The breadth of potential issues means that it is essential to keep a clear focus and agenda which is deliverable in the time available. Where an issue that arises cannot be handled in the available time, The Citizens' Convention may recommend it for consideration in a later Convention process.

We are stimulating a process which can address deep political issues and which must be trusted by the public, politicians and the media. Comprehensive democratic reform, called for in the four UK-wide parties represented in Parliament, is necessary at this scale in order to undertake the task of UK democratic renewal.

We know our politics is more polarised than ever – this fact itself is one of the driving forces behind the development of The Commission. However, there is now a strong desire to heal the nation. We want to help create a new partnership between citizens and their democratic representatives and institutions in order to counteract that drive towards polarisation.

The Citizens' Convention will be focused on the common foundation of democracy and governance. It is not a process to address any specific issues of public policy that may be brought to the table.

The political discourse is dominated by policy areas – like climate, social media, health, education and immigration. In contrast, The Citizens' Convention will only look at the structure of our democratic system: we will be talking about the rules of the game, not its policy results.

Having such a conversation in public will be immensely stimulating and help our democracy to evolve into the modern era. Policy questions speak to the immediate needs of both voters and politicians – and enjoy more attention from the media and Parliament as a result.

Sometimes, policy questions aren't easily separated from democratic or constitutional ones. As a result, we will need to be clear from the beginning that there are some issues that fit into The Citizens' Convention's remit and others which are beyond its scope.

One particular issue that will be outside the remit of The Citizens' Convention is the issue of Britain's relationship with the European Union. This will almost certainly still be a matter of live political debate while The Citizens' Convention is running and, if it is not explicitly excluded, it risks diverting much of the energy of The Citizens' Convention into a live and intensely divisive question. In addition, various live processes are likely to be underway, seeking to reach a UK consensus on the issue and we should not risk obstructing this process.

In addition, The Citizens' Convention will acknowledge any separate processes taking place in other parts of the UK on constitutional issues and will not seek to duplicate or interfere with these but look to work together with them, if appropriate. The Government's own Commission will be the ultimate arbiter.



III. A new partnership

Our elected representatives have begun and will end The Citizens' Convention's work. However, they will not control The Citizens' Convention, its agenda or its structure. Nonetheless, the politicians that we elect will be a central part of this process – not least since we are asking them how best to deliver the outcomes of The Citizens' Convention and Commission and subsequent stages of reform. We are delivering a practical set of outcomes, not just a report. Our UK-wide National Conversation will make space for elected representatives, campaign groups and civil society to contribute to the conversation, and during The Themed Assemblies we will be asking them to support the process with evidence and their personal stories.

The Commission and consideration by Parliament and Government are further stages where the views of our elected representatives will not only be heard but be decisive.

Our methods of deliberation will be largely online not least because of the pandemic and the truncated timescale. This will mean that all voices can be represented through the process. Communication, transparency, accessibility and inclusion are high priorities for The Citizens' Convention. This demands that we find imaginative, traditional and online ways for people to discuss subjects with which they may not be familiar or feel confident in addressing.

No process will have credibility unless it can demonstrate that everyone is able to participate, and that it is designed to make the experience of participating easy and enjoyable. During The UK-wide National Conversation, social media will be an important tool. We will allocate specific resources to finding and amplifying the voices of those who feel alienated from the political process, and whose confidence and willingness to participate may be low. We will ensure that everyone can participate and be represented fairly.

IV. People and Politics

The Citizens' Convention sees elected representatives in Parliament and Government as key partners if the proposals from citizens are to make progress. Part of the promise to citizens is that their recommendations will have a smooth and predictable path to consideration by the UK Parliament.

The Citizens' Convention must be independent, but close and sensitive working with Government will be the key to a practical and successful outcome. The final proposals will strengthen and complement our representative democracy, responding to citizens' deliberations by proposing a practical reform agenda which Parliament can take seriously and act upon. The CCUKD's liaison with senior MPs has been the most obvious example of this joint effort. We work closely with the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Deliberative Democracy. We would relish reporting regularly to the PACAC Select Committee as our work progresses. Also over recent years a group of parliamentarians of all parties agreed to deepen understanding of our project within Parliament and to be available to give impartial and practical advice to The Citizens' Convention, especially on its liaison with Parliament and Government.

In different forms, the agenda, letter of support and senior supporters have existed and evolved since 2015. We used the 2019 preparatory year to expand the understanding of The Citizens' Convention and of deliberation among a growing number of MPs of all parties.

Symbolising this work is the core group currently made up of David Davis MP (Former Secretary of State, Conservative), Cat Smith MP (Labour shadow Minister of State for the Cabinet Office), Sir Edward Davey MP (Leader, Liberal Democrats),

and Caroline Lucas MP (Leader, Parliamentary Green Party) who have signed the letter of support.

The core group remains open to welcoming a senior representative of all other non UK-wide parliamentary parties who have yet to join and who supports the concept of citizens' engagement ahead of The Commission being established. We respect the views of those from other parties who do not yet wish to join the group and they will continue to be regularly briefed on the work of The Citizens' Convention. If Parliament or HMG wish to nominate other names, they would be most welcome.

For democratic reform to succeed, we need practical proposals from our citizens, which can then be debated by The Commission and where appropriate be enacted through Parliament as legislation. Citizens and MPs fully comprehend and appreciate that there will only be change with the understanding and active support of the representatives that we all elect.

V. How will participants be recruited?

The UK-wide National Conversation stage of The Citizens' Convention will be open to all citizens and organised groups.

Participants in the Themed Assemblies or Summit parts of The Citizens' Convention will be chosen via civic lottery. The aim of this selection method is twofold:

1. Every adult in the UK has an equal chance of receiving the invitation to participate;
2. The membership of The Citizens' Convention will be a microcosm of UK society.

The recruitment and selection process for the Themed Assemblies will take place through three key stages:

1. Invitation to participants;
2. Stratified sampling;
3. Welcoming induction.

1. Invitation to participants

For each recruitment round, a large batch of invitations will be sent to households across the UK. These will be selected at random either from the Royal Mail's postcode database – the most complete and up-to-date address database in the UK – or the Electoral Register.

To encourage people to register their interest, the invitation package will need to include:

- A stylish invitation card that is attention grabbing (and does not look like spam);
- An official invitation letter, signed by prominent politicians – ideally the Party leaders;
- A short 'Frequently Asked Questions' sheet providing more detailed information and linked to the CCUKD website;
- A specifically designed envelope with enticing details printed externally.

People will need to be able to register their interest online or by freephone. During this registration process, people will be asked to provide their contact details and demographic data, which will be used during Stage 2 (see below).

A 3-7% response rate is typical from such an exercise. Invitation batches will need to be suitably large to ensure that a stratified sample can be achieved during Stage 2.

**FOR DEMOCRATIC
REFORM TO SUCCEED,
WE NEED PRACTICAL
PROPOSALS FROM
OUR CITIZENS,
WHICH CAN THEN
BE DEBATED AND
ENACTED THROUGH
PARLIAMENT AS
LEGISLATION**

2. Stratified sampling

The second-step of recruitment is a process of stratified selection. This ensures that the participants match the socio-demographic profile of the UK and overcomes any bias in the registration process (e.g. it is a common experience that younger and less educated individuals will be under-represented in the pool of registrants).

We will select people at random to be participants, marking off their characteristics against the key recruitment categories. Once a category becomes full (e.g. 18-29 year olds), people who fall into that category will no longer be eligible to be randomly selected. The selected assembly will therefore have an overall profile that matches census data as closely as possible, delivering a diverse and broadly representative membership.

The stratified selection will need to take place urgently to get the timetabled process underway promptly. A small pool of stand-by participants should be kept in case of dropouts ahead of the first weekend.

3. Welcoming induction

Once selected, members of The Themed Assemblies and the UK Citizens' Summit will need to be taken through an onboarding process (probably online and by telephone) in order to help ensure their participation.

Those selected will be sent a confirmation by letter and email, as well as receiving a courtesy call to address any questions or concerns they might have. Ahead of their participation, members should be sent:

- A short essential information document, with reminders/ information about:
 - How the online events will take place
 - When it is
 - The honorarium (and when and how participants will receive it)
 - What participants need to bring with them
 - The organiser's contact details
- A short briefing on The Citizens' Convention, the engagement process and what to expect;
- A short briefing about the topic of the Themed Assembly in which they are involved;
- The form for claiming expenses.

Our service providers know from experience that making these contacts friendly and efficient, and establishing a relationship with participants before the event, is an excellent way to maintain involvement.



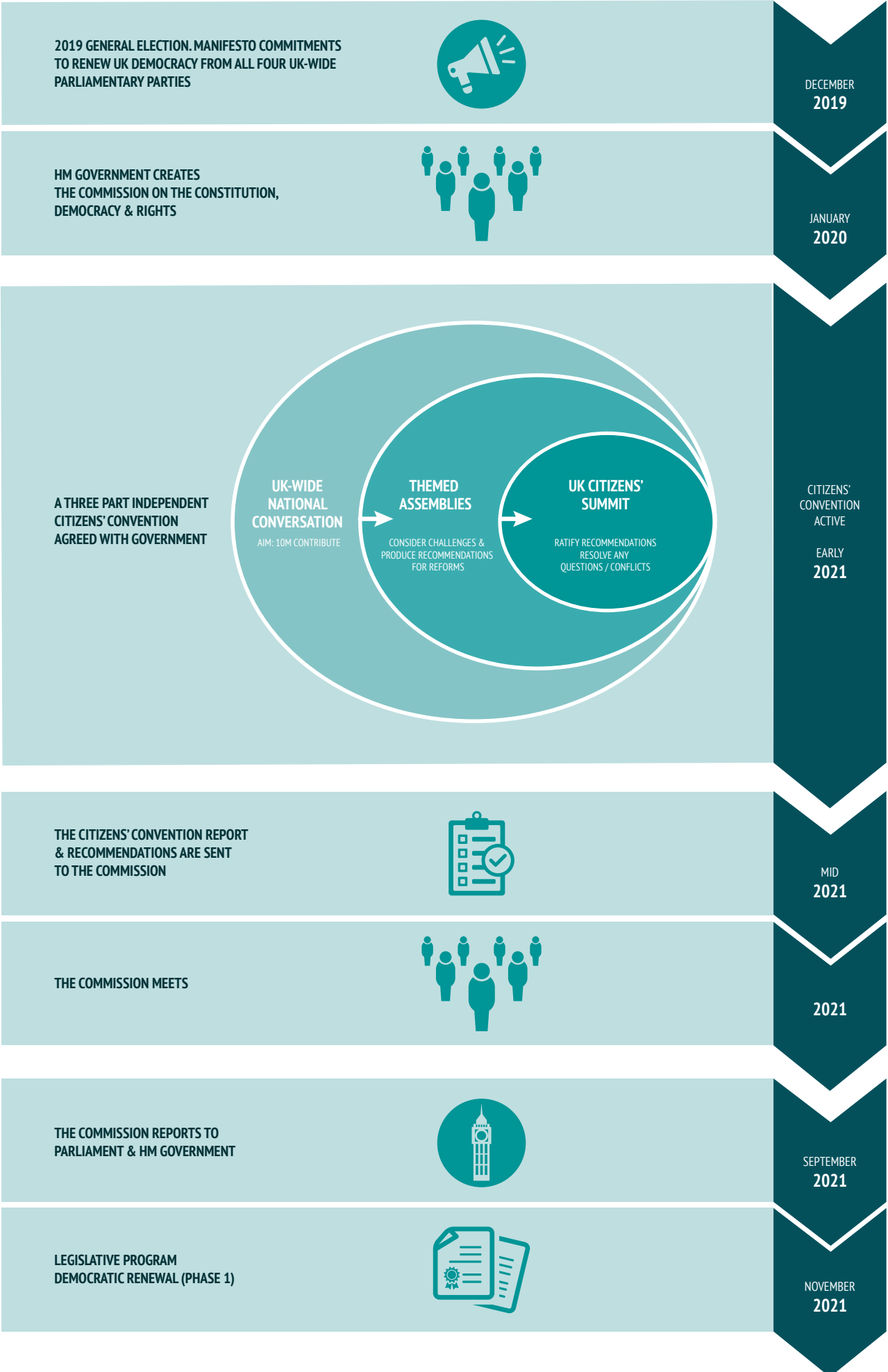
“WHAT ARE SOME OF THE KEY DEMOCRATIC TOPICS IN THE UK AND HOW SHOULD THEY BE ADDRESSED?”

The Parliamentary leaders group has since 2015 asked for the following issues to be considered by The Citizens’ Convention. These will be discussed with Government:

1. **Reviewing the powers and membership of the second chamber.**
2. **Examining the voting system at Parliamentary and local level to encourage greater participation in public life.**
3. **Reviewing the relationship between central and local Government, and the question of devolution for England.**
4. **Proposing how politics should be funded.**
5. **Examining the legal recognition given to some constitutional provisions, including individual rights.**
6. **Such other relevant democratic issues that may be recommended by The Citizens’ Convention as its work progresses.**

HOW THE PROCESS WILL WORK

Democratic renewal – everyone is involved



VI. The Structure of The Citizens' Convention

The Citizens' Convention process would consist of three parts, each with a distinct role:

- 1. UK-wide National Conversation** – a mass communications and engagement exercise to spark and support a UK-wide National Conversation on the challenges facing UK democracy and how they should be tackled;
- 2. Themed Assemblies** – working simultaneously to the Conversation, each Themed Assembly would consider its specific topic and their potential solutions in depth and produce recommendations for reforms; and,
- 3. UK Citizens' Summit** – to ratify the recommendations produced by the Themed Assemblies, and resolve any overarching questions or conflicts.

1. A UK-wide National Conversation

We set an aspiration at the outset of “10 million founding mothers and fathers” of a new democratic settlement in the UK. The enormous advances in technology, not least automated facilitation of discussion and deliberation, suddenly make progress towards this attainable.

It will be supported by an intensive but still deliberative social media campaign. The UK-wide National Conversation (The Conversation) will be a mass communications and engagement exercise to spark a widespread conversation and collect inputs to inform the rest of The Citizens' Convention. It will adopt methods from other successful deliberation and engagement exercises. These include the Irish Citizens' Assembly, examples from USA to Australia, the Grand Débat National in France as well each of the four nations of the UK and our localities. We have advisers on our team from each of these successful projects.

We will draw on the full array of participation tools from tabletop kits for discussion at home to the latest digital modes of engagement, and where face-to-face engagement is possible, encouraging national and local organisations to host events.



IF THE THEMED ASSEMBLIES ARE THE SOLOISTS, THE UK-WIDE NATIONAL CONVERSATION IS THE ORCHESTRA



Why it is important

The Conversation is an essential stage of The Citizens' Convention process to sustain excitement and raise awareness, to build a democratic community which feel themselves participants in the broader convention process, every community and area in the country.

Concern about the state of UK democracy is widespread, but it is diffuse and unfocused. Some people see the power of the Government and the weakness of Parliament as a serious issue, while others have particular concerns with overcentralisation of power, or with the role of the House of Lords. On all these areas, there is a need to understand the public conversation, to air the questions that are of most concern.

The Conversation would ground The Citizens' Convention in the hopes, fears, priorities and values of the public, while also collecting evidence from experts and stakeholders. It will raise awareness of The Citizens' Convention process, focusing on the opportunity it presents to reform UK democracy. It will provide a positive and constructive structure for change and build the popular pressure to treat citizens' concerns respectfully. It will produce a realistic and practical package for consideration by The Commission, Parliament and Government.

Who it would involve

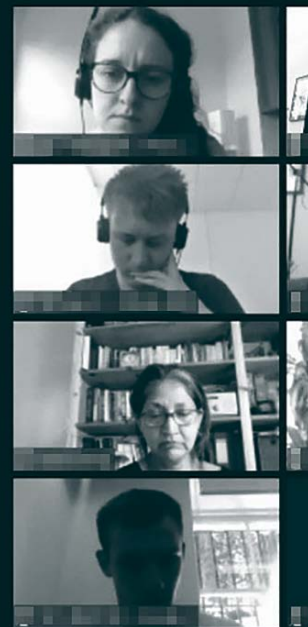
The Conversation is a form of mass participatory engagement, seeking to engage a large and diverse range of people. It will use communications, campaigns and engagement activity open to any interested groups or organisations to host a discussion, and any interested residents of the UK to take part.

Particular effort is planned to engage seldom-heard groups.

How it would work

The Conversation will use a range of channels and methods appropriate to the Covid-19 era to inform, mobilise and engage people in a conversation about UK democracy. Its starting place will be the agreed themes, the impact of democracy on people's lives and their aspirations for how the system could better serve them.

A national engagement campaign, including polling and social media, will be led by an expert communications agency to raise awareness of The Convention and prompt people's engagement with the work in sharing their thoughts on and priorities for democratic renewal. Ideally, this will be run in partnership with media partners, such as the BBC. A professionally run digital platform will be established as a central point of report for social media activity. This may contain survey elements as well as the possibility of using AI supported deliberative events through which we could hold 'town hall' meetings in a spread of regions. The Citizens' Convention team would produce materials on key democratic issues in a range of interactive formats and guides for groups to support their own deliberations. These formats will ensure people can all engage with similar content through the provision of written briefings or short videos and offer deliberative responses on what they've heard. Engagement in the conversation will also generate a long list of key issues for The Themed Assemblies to consider.



The Conversation will act to feed into the shape and direction of the Themed Assemblies. In preparation for this section of The Citizens' Convention, each Themed Assembly committee will make their agenda on each of the issues under discussion available. This offers an opportunity to the widest group of citizens to engage with the key issues proposed through a range of synchronous and asynchronous online activity.

At this stage, we would also issue a conventional call for evidence to collect input from experts and stakeholders. The evidence would be received by the CCUKD and collated in a separate report as part of the evidence materials for The Citizens' Convention.

If time allows, groups and organisations will be invited to apply for small grants to support them in hosting activity to feed in to the Conversation.

What it would produce

The first part of The Conversation will produce a range of survey data and information on citizens' opinions, values and concerns in response to briefing materials that help conveners understand public opinion and create media moments that can drive awareness and broaden the conversation. It will also provide key statistics to understand and reach a range of participants.

The second part of The Conversation is about informing the proceedings of the Themed Assemblies. Reporting from this activity will be summarised alongside the wider debate to produce an overall Report of The Conversation. This engagement is a precious (and hopefully historic) resource for every aspect of The Citizens' Convention process.

When it will happen

The Conversation will take place at the beginning of The Citizens' Convention process. It will run alongside and inform the Themed Assemblies.



10 groups of 8 people each with a personal or automated facilitator will make up each Themed Assembly

**MEANINGFUL
& RESPECTFUL
ENGAGEMENT MEANS
MUCH MORE THAN A
WEARY BUREAUCRATIC
CALL TO SEND IN YOUR
VIEWS IN WRITING.
THIS PROCESS SHOWS
HOW WE CAN DO IT
BETTER. IT IS THE
FUTURE OF DEMOCRATIC
ENGAGEMENT**

2. Themed Assemblies

Our working assumptions before negotiation with Government are along the following lines. The in-depth deliberations of The Citizens' Convention will be achieved by the scientific selection of 400 people, divided into five Themed Assemblies of 80 people working on their topic, often in 10 groups of 8 online and where possible face-to-face. Each Themed Assembly will hold a series of events to produce an immersion in the topic of around 40-50 hours. More and shorter sessions are likely to be the model online compared to offline. Having heard the range of evidence and opinion, each Themed Assembly will conclude by making recommendations for reforms that will be put to the UK Citizens' Summit for ratification.

The circumstances of the pandemic, as well as wider questions about cost efficiency and widening access have driven our decision to deliver the bulk of the Themed Assemblies digitally, but we will look to make use of face-to-face methods whenever the opportunity arises. An online approach involves using videoconferencing software to engage participants in a full deliberative process. The format includes a mixture of plenary and small group discussions and enables the input of expert speakers. Going online in this way retains levels of nuance and engaged dialogue comparable to face-to-face approaches but with state of the art adaptations and some distinct advantages including ease of geographic reach.

Why it is important

The Citizens' Convention will need to consider a vast amount of information, evidence and points of view in order to arrive at informed and well-reasoned recommendations. The Themed Assemblies will support this by receiving and synthesising those inputs and developing detailed recommendations.

Who it would involve

The Citizens' Convention assembly will be made up of a pool of 400 members selected by a process of sortition or civic lottery, to accurately reflect the UK population. Stratification criteria would include age, ethnicity, gender, region and socio-economic group. Further stratification criteria could include level of engagement with politics, political party affiliation and/or opinions on the democratic system.

Participants will be selected through a civic lottery, as described above. Invitations will be sent to approximately 20,000 households to participate, with a random stratified sample selected from those who respond positively. Participants will be given a monetary gift to recognise their contribution and encourage a diverse range of people to take part.

One alternative or addition to sortition is to recruit our representative sample for Themed Assemblies through a random probability survey panel, like the NatCen panel. Here respondents which are drawn from the British Attitudes survey and NatCen have successfully used this approach on a current large-scale Deliberative Polling project. It holds potential for recruitment in a shortened timescale.

How it would work

The online Themed Assemblies would be run as a citizens' assembly using videoconferencing software. Citizens participate while remaining at home in front of their screens. Its members would hear evidence from relevant experts, stakeholders and the UK-wide National Conversation. Decisions proceed by consensus and only where necessary balloting takes place to reach recommendations. Members are supported to deliberate (individually and collectively) on the basis of that evidence. Digitally, this means using a virtual 'main hall' for the event and moving participants between this and small group discussions, where they only share their screen with 8-10 others. The assemblies will use expert lead and small group facilitators, familiar with the functions of the online platform and who have experience of similar deliberations.

What it would produce

The Themed Assemblies would agree a package of detailed reforms to address the challenges of the theme they have been set. Each reform would come with clear justifications, including analysis of their advantages, disadvantages and any wider considerations. Where the Assembly has been unable to reach a clear-cut decision, it may choose to refer an issue – with supporting material around options – to the UK Citizens' Summit, for a final decision.

When it will happen

Each Themed Assembly could meet approximately 6 times, perhaps at intervals of 2 to 3 weeks. However, we will be guided by the latest up-to-date practise and evidence from our national and global experts before finalising this precisely.



OUR VOICE WILL BE HEARD THROUGH A THREE-PART CITIZENS' CONVENTION OF
1) A UK-WIDE NATIONAL CONVERSATION,
2) THEMED ASSEMBLIES
AND 3) A UK CITIZENS' SUMMIT.



3. UK Citizens' Summit

Why it is important

The UK Citizens' Summit will be the public and media culmination of the months of intensive work by citizens' and their Convention. It would ratify and launch The Citizens' Convention's recommendations. We would hope to do this face-to-face conditions permitting but we have prepared an online backup if required.

The Citizens' Convention process is a political process, and therefore the UK Citizens' Summit needs to ensure independence and demonstrate its legitimacy in order to secure support.

Who it would involve

The decision-making part of The UK Citizens' Summit would be made up of participants or representatives from all the Themed Assemblies, bringing them together – hopefully face-to-face – for the first time.

Ministers, Party Leaders, The Commission members, the media and other stakeholders would be present at an appropriate non-decision making point of the UK Citizens' Summit in order to celebrate the work.

As with the Themed Assemblies, participants will be given a monetary gift to recognise their contribution and encourage and enable people to take part.

How it would work

The UK Citizens' Summit would meet once, perhaps over a weekend, to consider the package of reforms proposed by the Themed Assemblies. As well as reviewing and ratifying the recommendations of the Assemblies, it would be responsible for considering any overarching issues or conflicts that have arisen out of The Citizens' Convention process.

The appropriate people, including the Prime Minister and the Chair of the Commission, would be present to formally receive the package of reforms.

What it would produce

The UK Citizens' Summit will produce the final package of reforms to go from citizens to The Commission and after due consideration, on to Parliament and Government. Convention experts will facilitate the smooth transition from recommendations to action, not least through producing draft Parliamentary Bills which MPs can debate and hone throughout the rest of The Commission process.

When it will happen

If Government agree the concept and negotiate the detail, the Convention could begin immediately. It would be possible to conclude the UK Citizens' Summit within six months if absolutely necessary. It is in no one's interest to hurriedly conclude this once in a lifetime opportunity. We will work to a final timetable, negotiated and agreed with HMG. **The longer the timetable, the higher involvement of citizens, the more we are able to achieve and the better the quality of the final outcome.**

VII. The room where it happens

The Citizens' Convention process puts citizens' in the room where it happens. They decide. They make the deliberative sausage. It is based on the principle of high-quality public deliberation in an environment in which everyone feels welcome and able to participate. The process will need to conform to good standards of deliberation in order to ensure its integrity and the credibility of the recommendations. From a citizen's perspective, it must be a positive and empowering experience, where they feel able to express themselves and exchange views with others in a respectful environment.

The Setting

The circumstances of the global pandemic mean we have been agile in our plans to ensure the vital work of the CCUKD can continue by taking our deliberations online, until such time as face-to-face opportunities can become a reality again.

From the beginning, participants will be kept informed about the process by a dedicated contact person and be offered any support they need to ensure they are able to attend. This includes accessible technical guides and test calls with our team to ensure confidence in their participation and offer basic guidance on how they can be set up in their home environment. We have selected a platform for delivery which allows us to use a variety of settings to create safe and positive conditions for people to deliberate. The technology also means we can mirror the experience of moving from plenary sessions involving all participants to small group discussions where in-depth conversations take place, supported by an experienced facilitator.

Any physical venues used in the course of The Citizens' Convention will be open and airy, with plenty of space to move around and that are accessible to everyone. All food and refreshments will be provided.

VIII. What principles would The Citizens' Convention need to fulfill?

While everyone can participate in The Conversation, not every individual will be able to take part in the Themed Assemblies. Like the jury in a trial, the participants will be trusted to deliver a fair outcome by the citizens not involved in the process. To build trust, The Citizens' Convention must be based on the following principles:

Clear remit

The Citizens' Convention as a whole, and each component part within it, must have a clear remit that is accessible and engaging to citizens.

Transparent

The process must be completely open and transparent to ensure trust and legitimacy. Participation will be on a basis of informed consent. We will be open with those taking part about what is expected of them, and make clear to them that they have the right to withdraw at any time.

Information

The Citizens' Convention must have access to the information it requires to make an informed decision. Its members should be able to select witnesses they wish to hear.

Clear process

The Citizens' Convention must have a clear process for considering the agenda, deliberating and making recommendations.

Neutral facilitation

The Citizens' Convention must be professionally facilitated to ensure that the process is neutral and that all participants are fully able to engage.

Sufficient time

The Citizens' Convention must allow its members sufficient time to learn about and deliberate the issues. The scope of each conversation should be proportionate to the time available.

Impactful results

The Citizens' Convention must arrive at robust and coherent recommendations and there must be strong political commitment to ensure those recommendations are respectively considered and, where persuasive, adopted by The Commission, and with their weight delivered to Parliament and Government. The Citizens' Convention must not be a talking shop but have a clear political end game.

**THE ROOM WHERE IT
HAPPENS**
**NO ONE REALLY KNOWS
HOW THE GAME IS
PLAYED**
THE ART OF THE TRADE
**HOW THE SAUSAGE
GETS MADE**
**THE ROOM WHERE IT
HAPPENS**

Hamilton – The Musical

**IX. Communicating The
Citizens' Convention**

The Citizens' Convention as a whole will be promoted throughout by a media and communications team, who will spark broader interest and engagement. The purpose of the communications strategy will be both to publicise and build support for The Citizens' Convention itself and to involve the wider public in deliberating on the themes. Social media will be a key element of the entire communications program.

Transparency throughout The Citizens' Convention will be crucial to its credibility. Citizens not selected to participate should be able to access, follow and comment on The Citizens' Convention, even if not actively involved in deliberation. If The Conversation is effective, it will spark widespread public interest in the process, which will echo in the Themed Assemblies deliberations, meaning that the process stays

in the public eye. The Citizens' Convention in all its aspects will be streamed live, so that people can follow the proceedings in real time online and continue to feed into The Conversation. Participants in The Citizens' Convention invariably become its most ardent and persuasive advocates and will be offered media training from media partners.

Evidence shows where the media attend the citizens' engagement process – rather than comment from afar – coverage is positive. Media will be granted access to some parts of The Citizens' Convention process, but must agree to a code of conduct, in order to protect the integrity of the process and to safeguard participants. Our participant team will help with support and media liaison so that participants feel fully comfortable with media in the room, and the media feel welcome and invited.





Part III

ESTABLISHING THE CITIZENS' CONVENTION

I. How would The Citizens' Convention be governed?

The Preparation Stage 2019

Trustworthy governance of the process is essential to fostering confidence and engagement. This involves both governance of democratic process and financial/probity oversight.

We outlined in the Users Manual 2019 the shape of a multi-year, externally-funded Convention using largely traditional offline methods and unencumbered by time constraints. We have had to move swiftly to evolve our project to meet today's new circumstances. We have also now moved to the political implementation phase with extensive contacts with Whitehall and No 10 over the last year.

The Implementation Stage 2020

The Project Director is Andrew Blick, based at King's College London and the Convener of the CCUKD is Graham Allen.

We have again been able to draw on a rich range of UK and international examples of citizens' assemblies and learn from the OECD, the Open Government Network and best practices globally. We are also working within the worldwide Democracy R&D network, a community of practitioners and experts in citizen participation who have been unstinting in their support and guidance.

The Advisory Board

For the last 2 years our work has been overseen by our Advisory Board, composed of distinguished advisors from a range of backgrounds who are lending their support and expertise to The Citizens' Convention planning and implementation. The Advisory Board's current membership is:

Miriam Levin (Formerly Department of Culture, Media and Sport),

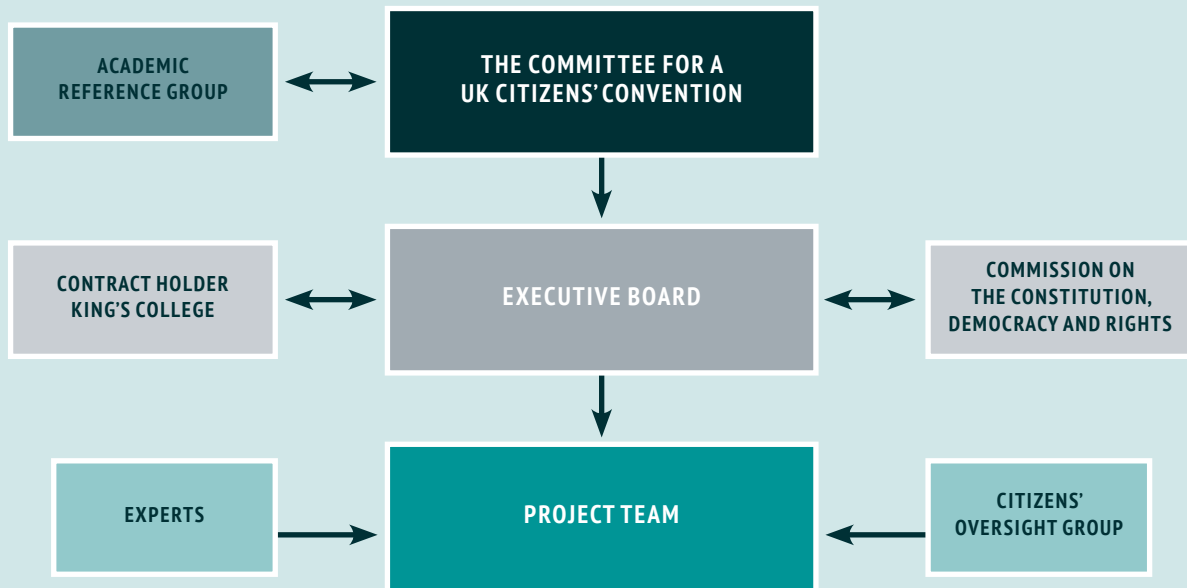
Dame Laura Cox (Former High Court Judge), Ryan Shorthouse (Bright Blue), David Halpern (Behavioural Insights Unit), Bobby Duffy (The Policy Institute, King's College), Matthew Taylor (RSA), Sir John Curtice (University of Strathclyde), Professor Robert Blackburn (King's College London), Kathy Jones (newDemocracy Australia), Areeq Chowdhury (Web Roots Democracy), Ceri Davies (National Centre for Social Research), Suzanne Hall (Ipsos Mori), Graham Allen (Chair Select Committee on Political Constitutional Reform 2010-2015) and David Farrell (University College Dublin).

All of the above have worked on the project. They have been greatly assisted by Iain Walker (newDemocracy Australia), Prof Jim Fishkin (Stanford Centre for Deliberative Democracy), Prof Jane Suiter (Dublin City University), Peter Macleod (Mass LLP, Canada), David Van Reybrouck (G1000 Belgium) and many other colleagues. This is a very high quality, experienced core group who are willing where appropriate to populate the proposed structure and bring the project to successful conclusion. Biographies can be found on www.ccukdemocracy.org/the-people

Partners with politics

We continue to develop our links to elected representatives, starting with the Senior Parliamentarians who have promoted the agenda for change and signed the letter of support. We will also work with the All Party Parliamentary Group on Deliberative Democracy, building the case amongst representatives of all parties to work together with citizens to find sustainable solutions to our current democratic challenges. This work will continue throughout the life of The Citizens' Convention and assist in ensuring completion of the work in The Commission, the Government and Parliament.

Structure 2020



During The Citizens' Convention

For The Citizens' Convention process, financial and probity governance are vital. We must ensure that the resources committed to the process are well used and that there are transparent decisions on how these should be used. In such a significant public engagement exercise, GDPR and privacy will be a priority.

Democratic governance will ensure that The Citizens' Convention process as a whole responds to and reflects the views of citizens, and that the key decisions and their implementation are supported by participants.

In addition, there will need to be nimble, effective day-to-day management of The Citizens' Convention. We will consider the appropriate legal form for this with our main official partner Kings' College London and HMG as we develop further.

We propose to HMG that our 2020 governance structure will have four elements:

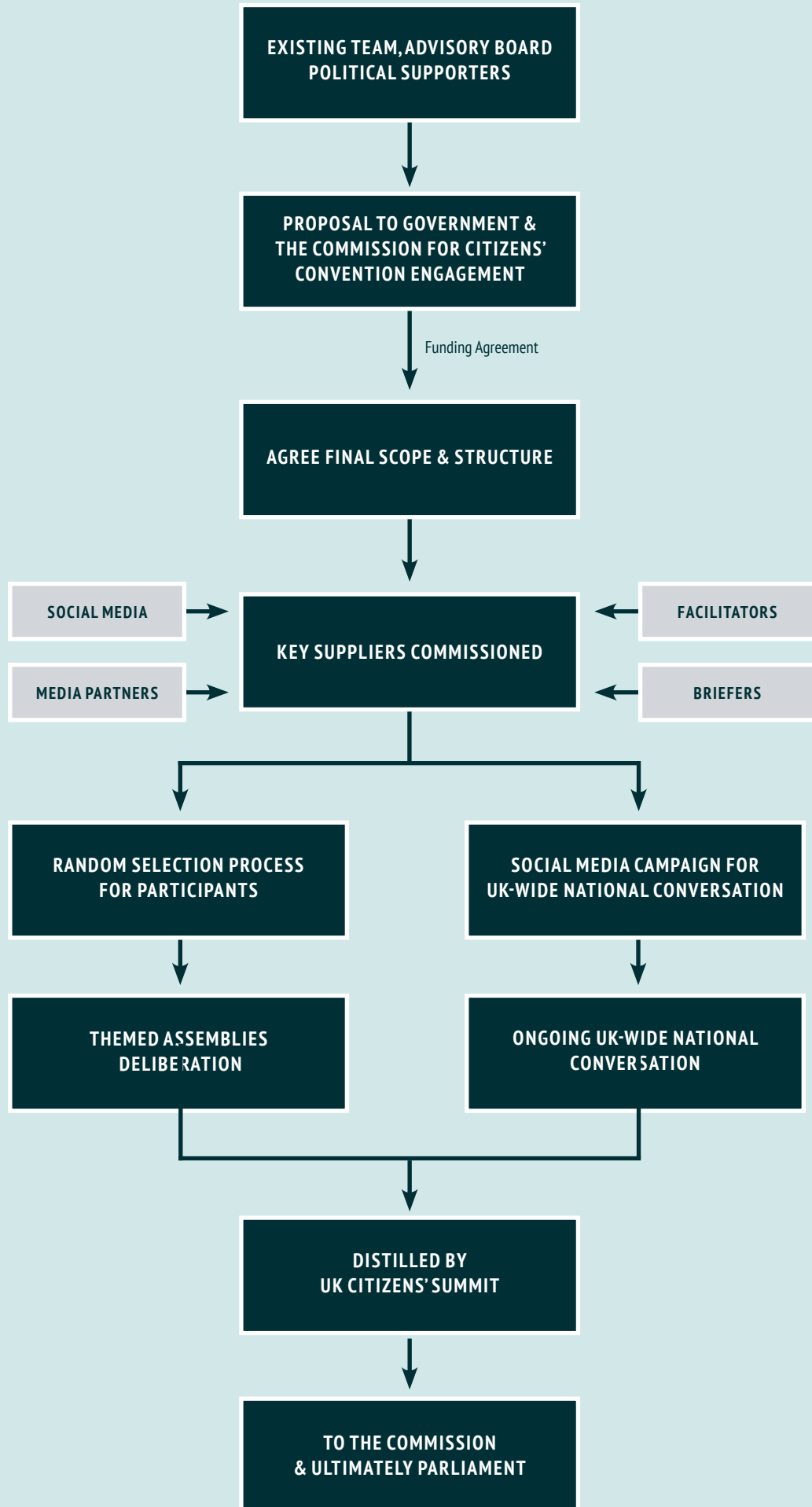
The Committee for a UK Citizens' Convention will meet monthly and be made up of the principal backers of the CCUKD drawn from the current Advisory Board and supplemented by Government nominees. It will be responsible for overseeing work plans, accounts and for allocating funding. The Committee has final decision making authority on finances and probity. It will appoint and delegate powers to a small Executive Board as appropriate.

The Citizen Oversight Group (COG) is a group of 25 citizens, meeting roughly quarterly throughout the process. They will receive briefings from the operational team and ensure that the decisions taken are on the basis of citizen views.

The Academic Reference Group is a group of academics and other process experts, not involved directly in the delivery of the project, who meet as required and comment by correspondence on process proposals and documentation. They provide support to the Committee and the COG, as well as to the operational Project Team.

The Project Team leads operations and the leadership of any permanent staffing structure for The Citizens' Convention. The Project Team will meet at least weekly and report to the Committee and the COG. It will manage and direct service providers including facilitators. Commissioning of work will be led by the Committee to ensure that there are no conflicts of interest and money received is spent in the most economically advantageous way. Service providers will be required to demonstrate the appropriate level of skill and expertise. The appointment of a capable Project Director with experience of executing deliberations and managing political and public administration is vital.

Progression



“My message to MPs is always ‘Give us your hardest problem’, the one where the wider public will feel cynical and any decision you reach alone won’t be trusted. By sharing the decision with a group selected like a jury, you get people from all walks of life standing alongside you to explain why they believe a decision is the right one.”

IAIN WALKER

newDemocracy Foundation, Australia

II. Cost of The Citizens’ Convention

Government is aware that The Citizens’ Convention is designed to be thorough, inclusive and ambitious and ensure the citizens involved have a rewarding experience. As such, the process itself will require appropriate resources to guarantee quality throughout, from the first public communications to the final bill-drafting process.

Throughout the course of the Preparation Phase, we have been generously supported by the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust and the Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust. We thank them for giving us the time to ensure The Citizens’ Convention is carefully designed, planned and prepared.

Our cost estimate for the full 2 year face-to-face process last year was £3 million. However, the shortened timetable and pivot towards online would cost significantly less than this.

This will fund:

- the communications and media, political liaison work,
- recruitment and selection of participants;
- the meetings, including travel, accommodation and participant gifts;
- the salaries for the core team – including communications, participant support and project oversight;
- and the final bill drafting process.

III. Our thanks

A massive vote of thanks goes to all those from 2015 onwards who have helped us get to this point on our journey, most of whom give their unstinting expert assistance free of charge. Thank you also to those who’ve helped advise, guide and support the project as it develops. Your hard work is coming to fruition.

Further background and Frequently Asked Questions can be found on www.ccukdemocracy.org

CALL TO ACTION

In tackling our challenges from Coronavirus to climate change, trust and faith in our democracy is the key. Decisions being made at all Government levels will have long lasting impacts on the British community. Our people must be an active part of the process. Democracy is more than what happens at the ballot box. It is about bringing people together so that they can share in their civic duty.

The UK Government has already established a Constitution, Democracy and Rights Commission. Its role is to examine the broader aspects of our democracy and to develop proposals to restore trust in our institutions and in how our democracy operates.

This Proposal makes the case for citizens' engagement in The Commission's work through the process of a Citizens' Convention on UK Democracy. This would include a **UK-wide National Conversation** and **Themed Assemblies** powered by small group discussions of randomly selected citizens, focused on doing democracy better. It will culminate in a report and recommendations agreed by a **UK Citizens' Summit**.

The Commission is the ideal vehicle to sponsor this process.

The CCUKD is ready to go right now. It is wholly independent, has cross party affiliations, strong international links and is inclusive of academic collaboration as well as a range of other UK providers and experts.

WE ASK THE GOVERNMENT TO ENSURE THAT THE COMMISSION SEIZES THIS OPPORTUNITY TO ENGAGE OUR CITIZENS IN THE MOST MEANINGFUL WAY POSSIBLE.

THE CITIZENS' CONVENTION ON UK DEMOCRACY

October 2020

GIVE US A SAY.
BRING THE COUNTRY TOGETHER.
STRENGTHEN OUR DEMOCRACY.

