

Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee
Tuesday 16 April 2024
13th Meeting, 2024 (Session 6)

People's Panel on Climate Change

Introduction

1. Section 91 of the [Climate Change \(Scotland\) Act 2009](#) ('the 2009 Act') places a duty on the Scottish Government to publish a public engagement strategy for climate change and to review it every five years. The strategy must propose actions that deliver its core aims: to inform the public of Scotland's statutory climate change targets, and to encourage them to play their part in achieving those targets.
2. The current [public engagement strategy for climate change](#) was published in 2021. The report says that a 'mid-term review' of the strategy will be undertaken in 2024 to assess progress towards the objectives of the strategy and to collect feedback on how it can be improved.
3. At its meeting on [19 September](#), the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee agreed to carry out post-legislative scrutiny of Section 91 of the 2009 Act. To achieve this, the Committee agreed to apply to participate in a pilot deliberative democracy exercise involving a People's Panel. The People's Panel published its report on 11 April 2024 and members of the Panel have been invited to discuss their scrutiny and recommendations with the Committee at its meeting on 16 April 2024.

Deliberative Democracy and People's Panels

4. A 'People's Panel' is a form of deliberative democracy where members of the general public can consider issues of importance. The aim of a People's Panel is to discuss and share ideas, before coming to a collective view to inform decision-making from the bottom-up. They can also be referred to as a 'Citizen's Assembly' or 'Citizen's Panel'.
5. The Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee recently undertook an [inquiry into embedding deliberative democracy](#) in the work of the Scottish Parliament. That Committee made a number of practical suggestions for how forms of participatory democracy such as People's Panels could be meaningfully deployed to enhance the scrutiny work of parliamentary committees. It recommended that, as a starting point, the Parliament should run two new pilot Citizen's Panels, including one that was specifically focused on post-legislative scrutiny. The Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee agreed to propose its intention to carry out post-legislative scrutiny on section 91 of the 2009 Act as a candidate for a panel. This was endorsed by the Conveners Group on 25 October.

An overview of the work of the People's Panel

6. A total of twenty-three individuals sat on the Panel. They were chosen to reflect

the wider Scottish population in terms of characteristics such as demographics and geography.

7. The Panel convened over two residential weekends and two online sessions in February and March 2024. It was tasked with considering and responding to two questions:
 - How effective has the Scottish Government been at engaging the public on climate change and Scotland's climate change targets?
 - What else (if anything) could the Scottish Government do to inform and involve the public to help meet Scotland's climate change targets?
8. To answer these questions, the Panel took evidence from stakeholders and experts on climate change. They also met with some Members of the NZET Committee. Some materials used by the Panel as part of its considerations can be accessed on the [NZET Committee's webpage](#).
9. Following the Panel's deliberations, [a final report was published on 11 April 2024](#) setting out 18 conclusions and recommendations for how the Scottish Government's approach to public engagement can be improved.

NZET meeting on 16 April

10. On 16 April, the Committee will hear some participants in the Panel to discuss the recommendations in the report, as well reflections on the experience of participating in the Panel.

Next steps

11. The recommendations of the Panel will be used to inform the Committee's scrutiny of section 91 of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009, and future work on net zero and climate change, including the next Climate Change Plan.

Clerks to the Committee
April 2024