



Our Money, Our Planet

**Engaging Citizens in the Climate Emergency
through Participatory Democracy**

**Including a report of a series of co-design
workshops held between June and September 2019**

Acknowledgements

Thanks go to all of the participants of our co-design workshops, held across the UK between June and September 2019, who have contributed their ideas and made this report possible.

About the Authors

Through PB Partners Alan Budge and Jez Hall have been promoting the role of participatory budgeting for engaging citizens in decision making over public budgets for over 15 years.

PB Partners is a not for profit consultancy coordinated by Shared Future CIC. Find out more about PB Partners at www.pbpartners.org.uk

About Shared Future

We are a community interest company primarily serving the North West of England, and with associates based across the UK.

Our aim is to provide an excellent service that makes a difference to communities and individuals and works towards a fairer, more equal society.

Through our commitment to creating a fairer and more sustainable world, we decided to set up Shared Future in 2009. We've built a team of experienced consultants and practitioners with a diverse range of skills. We work together on worthwhile and stimulating projects that reflect our personal values.



www.sharedfuturecic.org.uk

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Preface

The climate crisis

In August 2018, Greta Thunberg, a fifteen year old Swedish schoolgirl, went on strike.

She sat herself down outside the Swedish Parliament building and began her one-person 'climate strike'. One year on, schools around the world are now 'striking for the climate' on a regular basis.

In that time, the Extinction Rebellion movement has also grown into an internationally recognised phenomenon. Whilst its tactics of closing thoroughfares, disrupting rail services and other direct actions have proved controversial, there is no doubt that the climate crisis is a far more pressing and visible issue for politicians, the media, and the general public than it was even 12 months ago.

For example, on 8th August 2019 the lead news item on both the BBC and Channel 4 highlighted a new IPCC report emphasising the need for major changes in food consumption and more sustainable land management.

Greta Thunberg's message in essence, is to believe the science, and stop burning fossil fuels.

There is a vast amount of available evidence that climate change poses a genuine threat to our future, and that the causes of this are the result of human activity, an unequal and unfair economic system predicated on growth, and of a failure of political will to makes changes that might be electorally unpopular.

If the mean global temperature of the earth reaches 1.5-2 degrees higher than at present, and there are plenty of indications that this increase will be surpassed, then the consequences in terms of depopulation, mass migration, major disruptions to food supplies and rising sea levels will be catastrophic.

The ecological effects of climate change, of reducing biodiversity and destruction of habitats is equally worrying to our long-term well-being. Time is short and practical solutions have to be found.

We hope this report will contribute towards the much needed transition to a low and preferably zero carbon economy.

Alan Budge and Jez Hall, October 2019

NB: Images used in this report are taken from a variety of sources and not directly related to the accompanying text. Cover includes screenshots from the PB Scotland film 'Moving Towards the Mainstream'. <https://pbscotland.scot/film>

A Local Participatory Approach

There is overwhelming evidence that we are in a climate emergency. It is of maximum importance that we move on from debating the evidence towards taking immediate action. Given the reluctance of politicians to take decisive action so far this appears to remain a very challenging task.

Whilst the many recent declarations of a climate emergency have been showing the increasing concern regarding climate change, the cultural shifts required seem effectively beyond our reach.

We live within a political system that is committed to economic growth, exemplified by policies such as building the third runway at Heathrow.

Institutionally, change is slow, with complex rules over planning, transport and land use and many rules, regulations and policies to review.

Personally, we have built our lives around a reliance on environmentally unsustainable convenience products such as cars, 'flown-in' foods and disposable fashion.

Many people feel a sense of powerlessness, and a lack of influence, over what is increasingly seen as an existential threat to our own future, and the future of our planet. However, if we are to try to turn things around, we have to start somewhere.

Our Money, Our Planet

This report outlines some possible ways to make some progress, based on our experience and knowledge of participatory approaches, which put citizens into the driving seat of decision-making whilst improving transparency and governance at a local authority level.

One process is **Participatory Budgeting (PB)**. Another is **Citizens' Juries and Assemblies**. Both are discussed within this report.

We have also drawn on the findings of our series of **'Our Money, Our Planet'** workshops. We held these workshops across the UK in 2019. Their aim was to explore how Participatory Budgeting might most effectively help to address our impending climate crisis, and its links to a Green New Deal.

Lisbon's Green PB

Starting in 2019 Lisbon City Council's first-ever 'green' PB, an initiative supported and managed by South Pole and EIT Climate-KIC's City Finance Lab, has been allocated a €5 million budget to support climate change mitigation and adaptation projects selected by local citizens.

Part of Lisbon City's wider participatory budget, it sets aside funds for projects with positive climate change mitigation and adaptation impacts, such as cycling lanes, tree planting for street heat reduction, or water capture and storage. The impact of the 'green' participatory budget is designed to be two-fold; ensuring constant annual investments into the city's low-carbon transition, whilst also raising awareness among citizens of the benefits of climate change mitigation and adaptation projects.

Edmonton Citizens' Panel on Energy & Climate

Starting in Oct 2012 a 56-member citizens' inquiry was commissioned by the Canadian city of Edmonton to help develop an energy transition plan. Its recommendations were accepted by the administration and integrated into the final strategy. The process began with deliberating upon guiding principles and values important to keep in mind as the Council went forward with any recommendations. It produced its own recommendations and voted on existing transitions plans. The first recommendation was 'Speed': to set strong, measurable targets for energy transition with aggressive short-term targets. In terms of pre-programme foundation, post-programme follow-up, and the engagement of the participants throughout the process it was an effective example of deliberative democracy.

Participatory Budgeting

Participatory Budgeting (PB) originated in Brazil in the 1980s, has since spread worldwide. It is a method of giving local people the opportunity to decide where public money is spent in their communities, towns and cities.

A Brazilian resident involved in PB in its early development said

“If it feels like we’ve decided, it’s PB. If it feels like someone else has decided, it isn’t.”

This core principle, of residents having their say on the allocation of resources is central to PB, regardless of its scale. People naturally feel they want to have influence over where they live.

PB provides this sense of influence in a very practical way. It is important to recognise that PB is an effective community engagement tool, and more than merely a different means of allocating resources. PB connects the priorities of citizens with policy-makers and it drives innovation.

PB occurs across the UK, primarily in the form of participatory grant making, but increasingly it is also directly shaping public services.

At its heart PB is fundamentally concerned with creating social capital and common purpose. Connecting people and ensuring they have influence over what happens in their community. Based on the principle that residents are the ‘experts’ in their communities.

The benefits that a PB approach brings, apart from an efficient allocation of resources, are to be found within:

- Increasing trust between residents, politicians and public agencies,
- A genuine sense of influence by individuals living within those communities,
- Greater awareness of the constraints within budget-setting and spending processes,
- Shared responsibility for the wellbeing of the places in which people live, work and study.

Participatory Budgeting (PB)

PB has been rapidly growing worldwide and operates at many different scales, from very small budgets within villages or neighbourhoods, to multi-million pound citywide and even national processes.

For example in 2018 in Dundee 11,000+ residents voted how to spend £1.2 million on community infrastructure, such as parks, playgrounds and transport routes.

Whilst not new in the UK, with examples stretching back 15 years, the last 5 years (e.g. 2015 onwards) have seen PB really take off in Scotland, with all 32 local authorities in Scotland committing to spend 1% of their central government allocated budgets through PB. That equates to £100m per year across Scotland or an average of £3m per council, and this could grow significantly as PB starts to influence other funds.

There is not one defined model, as PB must always be contextualised to the local conditions, but a set common principles around PB have been emerging.

The seven defining characteristics of a well-functioning PB process are:

- 1) Citizens directly decide public investment.
- 2) Measurable change (it’s not consultation).
- 3) Citizens can shape the rules governing PB.
- 4) PB includes space for deliberation.
- 5) PB redistributes resource based on need.
- 6) Citizens are able to monitor spending.
- 7) It is repeated (e.g. on an annual basis).

A considerable body of expertise has grown up on how to do PB over the last 30 years, and there is a vibrant international academic and activist network sharing best practices, models and approaches. Find out more about PB at:

www.pbnetwork.org.uk



Citizens' Assemblies and Juries

Alongside its PB work Shared Future CIC specialises in deliberative democracy.

Specifically, citizen-led Inquiries, or mini-publics as they are sometimes known, as they represent a 'microcosm' of the general public. Processes which include citizens' juries, panels and assemblies, where a well structured deliberation occurs between randomly selected citizens.

Climate Change Citizens' Assemblies have been given prominence by Extinction Rebellion (XR).

Holding Citizens' Assemblies is one of XR's 3 key demands. XR sees them as a mechanism for engaging the general population in discussing local or national solutions to climate change.

XR are calling for a transformation in our democracy to facilitate the necessary policies to address the climate and ecological emergency for all of us. XR believes this transformation, to be successful, requires new democratic processes to be embedded into the DNA of our political culture at all levels; from local communities up to the highest levels of government.

(Source: <https://www.xrdemocracy.uk/>)

Our experience is that authorities with political and professional commitment to implementing the recommendations of a deliberative process can deliver real citizen-led change.

Producing outcomes that make a real difference to local people and the work of public bodies.

Citizen Juries, Assemblies and Mini-Publics

A citizens' assembly or jury is typically made up of a group of diverse people selected at random.

Members of the inquiry share knowledge, expertise and opinions before questioning a series of '**commentators**' (also known as expert witnesses) — specialists they have called to provide different perspectives on the inquiry topic.

Where possible they seek consensus before producing a set of **recommendations**. These are shared widely and action planned at a stakeholder's conference. Thereby influencing public policy and shaping the commissioning of public services. The main difference between an assembly and an inquiry is in its scale. An assembly is typically over 50 people and an jury is around 25 people. Their smaller size makes citizens' juries more affordable and so feasible to deliver at a local authority level.

Shared Future facilitates citizen –led inquiries on a huge range of topics. As the facilitators we stand apart from making recommendations, and see our role as supporting the quality of the deliberation and making sure best practice is followed.



The twelve strong oversight panel included representation from The City Council, the Chamber of Commerce and Extinction Rebellion.

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Declaring the Climate Emergency



Over 200 of the UK's 408 principal Local Authorities have declared a climate emergency. Committing them to taking urgent action to reduce their carbon emissions.

(Source: <https://www.climateemergency.uk/>)

This demonstrates, at the very least, genuine concern by Local Government and their acceptance of the need to talk about the issue and start to effect real change. It has long been within the remit of local government to deliver on local environmental issues, including re-cycling, pollution control, the reduction of harmful emissions by limiting the numbers of vehicles in towns and cities or by increased use of cycle lanes.

'Great way of involving, energising, engaging and networking'

'Seemed wonderful – how can we do more of it?'

Quotes from participants at a pilot 'Clean, Green' PB event, Bradford: 2004

In terms of responding to the potential scale of the self-declared emergency, however, it is difficult for Local Authorities to identify major steps forward.

As highlighted earlier in this report, the apparent indifference to climate issues by some residents could stem from a perceived inability to have any genuine influence on a seemingly intractable problem. It's not seen as a vote winner.

This in turn can inhibit politicians and policy-makers in implementing effective interventions.

This situation is exacerbated by most local authorities already struggling to meet their existing commitments to deliver core services as a result of ongoing austerity policies.

PB can improve relationships between citizens and their council. Empowering and connecting individuals to their neighbours and to elected officials

We know that PB is a tried and tested way to engage the general public. Since 2014 all 32 Local Authority areas in Scotland have engaged in some form of PB, with approaching 100,000 active participants, and over £10million allocated through PB so far.

In summary, PB would seem to be a 'natural fit' for allocating public funds for tackling climate change:

- Budgets, whilst always in flux are still available on an ongoing, annual basis.
- A 'target audience' for PB is easy to define, if based on council wards and structures.
- A small grants PB exercise, held locally, could be a 'quick win' for Local Authorities who have declared a climate emergency, and also act as an awareness-raising forum regarding more strategic approaches.
- Residents' are interested in improving their community. It's close and meaningful to them.
- Local Authorities and Councils can take an independent lead on this initiative, without being 'led' by national policy and priorities.

Our Money, Our Planet Workshops

We held six ‘Our Money, Our Planet: PB and the Green New Deal’ workshops between June and September 2019 in Oxford, Brighton, Bristol, Edinburgh, Manchester and Wigan.

Nearly 100 attendees, including local councillors, council officers and climate activists, came together to consider how a more participatory approach to decision-making might impact positively on climate issues.

Findings from the workshops supported our own view that when combined with other initiatives, like citizens’ assemblies, PB had a key role to play in developing strategies to address the climate crisis at a Local Authority level.

At the highest level this might be by developing policies for local Carbon Budgets; to agree local carbon emission targets, and within such limits decide, individually and collectively what activities to prioritise, to reduce or stop altogether.

These are complex issues, requiring citizens to also change their behaviour. Councils will not be able to do it alone. Through using citizens’ assemblies, and through adopting PB, workshop participants felt residents would gain increased confidence to accept the trade-offs needed within hard to communicate policies such as carbon budgeting.

The lively discussions were wide-ranging. Some of the main emerging recommendations were as follows. Quotes are directly from participants:

a) Accessible Community PB Funding

“PB is a way for communities to exert influence locally; to ‘green’ our own communities. Rather than the commonplace view of our powerlessness in the face of climate change”

- People ‘learn by doing’. Through engagement with local green initiatives a new awareness and new strategies towards a broader environmental agenda will develop.
- Local ‘green’ interventions require less specialist expertise, so anyone can start them.

- Through the ‘ownership’ of decisions PB can help foster community buy-in to existing green initiatives (such as more cycle lanes or less food waste). It would mean more take-up, rather than the ‘Transition Agenda’ being imposed from above.
- It’s important to start locally, on issues that can be owned locally – and nothing too controversial to begin with – build the model up over time.
- Invite politicians to support residents. Both they and local citizens will see change happen as projects are built and finished. The ultimate outcome will be increased civic pride.

b) Raise Awareness in Communities through adopting PB

“Once a Council had declared a climate emergency a (small grant) PB event would be a way to start”

- PB can help change peoples’ mindsets regarding the environmental crisis. ‘Green’ issues are not currently most peoples’ No.1 priority. PB events would act as showcases to raise broader awareness of green issues.
- PB allows citizens and politicians to work together. Plus you need to involve all potential partner organisations – the climate emergency is not just another council policy.

c) Engage All Stakeholders in the Climate Emergency

“More needs to be done to raise Green New Deal ideas with Local Authorities and their Partners”

- We need to better publicise the climate emergency, starting with the front page of the Council website, alongside TV, radio and media coverage, with if possible local celebrity or high profile endorsement.
- To foster ownership of green initiatives there is a need for more staff within council and

partner organisations to also be able to influence 'in-house' Carbon Budgets. It's not just something for communities.

- Connect better with the investments by social landlords towards transition, as it is likely some part of what they are already doing.
- Spread an idea of setting up a local PB fund to local politicians and grant funders and get private businesses involved in supporting it.

d) Link PB with Citizens' Assemblies

"Citizens' Assemblies allow citizens the means to influence wider plans around addressing the climate crisis"

- PB can operate locally, and to get into discussing the more complex big money. And a citizens' assembly could be city-wide.
- Propose that Councils fund and develop ongoing citizens' assemblies and through connecting PB into them develop timelines and project plans, so that it is not all just talk.
- Focus activity first on transport or environmental improvements, using PB to make choices on how public resources are allocated, based on recommendations taken from the Citizens' Assemblies.

e) Deepening the Debate

"By being imaginative we'll better understand and grow the relationship between large scale top down and small scale bottom up solutions"

- Help citizens understand where the Council's money come from. Link up Participatory Democracy and Open Government initiatives.
- Improving budget literacy will bring greater accountability and put pressure for change on the council and the wider system. With perhaps even the potential of raising local voices to a national level.
- Find ways for PB to shape larger capital budgets. Area and place based regeneration and capital spending matters. That will help to shift the super-tanker of spend.

f) Consider the Economic Impacts

"Are there possibilities to raise funding, such as a local tax for climate adaption, collected by the council and spent by those that contributed?"

- Make the link with programmes and policies such as climate jobs, re-nationalisation and The Green New Deal.
- Consider if there is a need for Carbon Impact Assessments within any PB process. A sustainability agenda should underpin PB project design.
- Make use of any available national levers, because that is where the significant power lies. Find and encourage the signs of political will coming from the top.

Of course not all of these are going to be easy to achieve. The workshops also took a more realistic approach to the inevitable challenges.

g) Challenges

"Are we really willing to really embrace change?"

- Traditional media like to emphasise conflict and drama, which can de-rail the debate and block innovation.
- There is always a challenge in letting go and devolving power. Power holds onto power.
- The trap of lip-service and tokenism. Not everyone gets the message, and the culture of local authorities can be very risk averse.
- Risks from ineffective policies or unacceptable costs for citizens. Can politicians take on that risk at the ballot box?
- How easy is it to use PB to make the longer term budgetary commitments needed, up to or more than 5 years in some cases?

We all need to realise the nature of human beings and our responses to threat and to grief. We naturally have an emotional response to bad news. While we may rationally know we have a short window to make changes, we also need to sustain change over the long period.

PB will help people engage with change in a positive way. Putting power into their hands.

Take the Plunge: Your First Steps

PB Partners have over 15 years' experience of developing PB models at both small grants and mainstream levels.

Our experience has shown us that, as well as being an innovative means of allocating public budgets, PB events have demonstrated, time and again, their value in community networking, sharing information locally. Developing greater levels of trust between residents, elected members and service providers.

“PB can operate locally, a Citizens' Assembly could be city-wide.”

(Quote by participant at our Brighton Workshop)

A key theme explored at our recent national workshops was that locally run green PB events could act as recruiting grounds for creating greater understanding of climate change. It will also offer ways to develop the more strategic approaches needed to tackle the climate crisis.

If, as per the Lisbon case study on page 4, PB events *‘Raise awareness among citizens of the benefits of climate change mitigation and adaptation projects’*, that suggests strongly that green PB events would have a double purpose; to allocate resources for community led climate programmes, and provide a pathway towards larger and more strategic approaches.

Many thousands of PB programmes have been recorded in the last 30 years.

(Source: www.oficina.org.pt/hopefordemocracy)

Climate change represents a huge global challenge. Although PB and Citizens' Juries and Assemblies won't solve the problem on their own, they have an important contribution to make.

Shared Future, with its expertise in deliberative democracy and its PB Partners are ideally placed to provide tailored support to the development of these programmes, within local authority areas. Our programmes will always include partner organisations and third sector involvement, and put the voice of citizens first.

WHAT NEXT?

To deliver a successful PB programme three things are necessary:

- Political and senior leadership approval.
- An identified budget to distribute. (An initial budget can be modest and in the region of £10,000 to £20,000).
- Staffing and public engagement infrastructure to enable the process.
- In our experience, a small-scale PB voting event can usually be delivered within a six month period.

The first action towards developing a PB programme is normally convening a stakeholder workshop. Bring key influencers, interested parties and activists to a briefing on the theory and practice of delivering PB. After that first meeting you can move towards the detailed project design. Additional considerations that we can help you think through might include:

- Using sortition to select a trusted, diverse citizen-led PB design group.
- Identify the areas where issues of equity, public interest and climate change align.
- Going straight to the people; offering residents ways to make the case to public leaders.

A similar approach, of holding an initial design workshop is needed if planning a citizen's jury or citizens' assembly process.

We are able to provide support to any stage of this process. Our contact details are provided on the back of this report.

‘Scotland's PB journey has gone from a handful of voters in 2014 to over 97,000 in the past two years. Much of that is due to the expertise, professionalism and support provided by PB partners and I would have no hesitation in highly recommending them.’

Kathleen Glazik, Community Empowerment Team Leader, the Scottish Government.

References

Councils Declaring a Climate Emergency



(Map from <https://www.climateemergency.uk/blog/map-of-local-council-declarations/> as of October 2019)

Participatory Budgeting:

'OUR MONEY, OUR PLANET' - PB PARTNERS BLOGPOST:
<https://sharedfuturecic.org.uk/our-money-our-planet-participatory-budgeting-and-the-green-new-deal/>

Citizens' Assemblies and Juries

'CITIZENS' ASSEMBLIES, CITIZENS' JURIES AND CLIMATE CHANGE' – SHARED FUTURE BLOGPOST (1):
<https://sharedfuturecic.org.uk/citizens-assemblies-citizens-juries-and-climate-change/>

'BEYOND THE BALLOT' – SHARED FUTURE BLOGPOST (2):
<https://sharedfuturecic.org.uk/beyond-the-ballot-how-citizens-can-lead-the-climate-change-conversation/>

THE LEEDS CLIMATE CHANGE CITIZENS' JURY:
<https://www.leedscclimate.org.uk/leeds-climate-change-citizens-jury>

The Green New Deal

THE GREEN NEW DEAL GROUP UK:
<https://greennewdealgroup.org>

NEW ECONOMICS FOUNDATION:
<https://neweconomics.org/campaigns/green-new-deal>

GREEN NEW DEAL IN THE USA ON WIKIPEDIA:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Green_New_Deal

Text References

LISBON'S GREEN PB PROGRAMME:
<https://www.southpole.com/sv/news/lisbons-city-finance-lab-backed-green-participatory-budget-receive-5-million-budget-for-next-cyc>

EDMONTON'S CITIZENS' PANEL ON ENERGY AND CLIMATE:
<https://participedia.net/case/982>

Links to Other Relevant Websites

CLIMATE EMERGENCY UK:
<https://www.climateemergency.uk/>

SURVEY OF MOST CLIMATE FRIENDLY UK COUNCILS:
https://policy.friendsoftheearth.uk/sites/files/policy/documents/2019-09/League_table_English_Regions.pdf

FOE CALL FOR CLIMATE FRIENDLY COUNCILS:
<https://www.thisislocalondon.co.uk/news/17940779.boroughs-must-climate-friendly-say-friends-earth>

Links to PB toolkits

AN INTRODUCTORY GUIDE TO PB
<https://pbnetwork.org.uk/introductory-guide-to-participatory-budgeting-published-by-the-pb-network/>

PARTICIPATORY GRANT MAKING THROUGH PB
<https://pbnetwork.org.uk/grant-making-through-participatory-budgeting-a-how-to-guide/>

MAINSTREAMING PB GUIDE
<https://pbnetwork.org.uk/mainstreaming-participatory-budgeting/>

EVALUATING PB GUIDE
<https://pbnetwork.org.uk/hear-the-voice-make-the-change/>

Web links checked October 2019



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