

Analysis of the ScotGov response to the Climate Citizens Assembly

This overview is based on an analysis of the 81 recommendations made by the Assembly, and the Scottish Government Response.

Of the 81 Recommendations

- **Government supports or partially supports 52 of them (64%).** This mainly happens when:
 - **Recommendations are generalised in content** – eg would anyone object to: No 69 *Invest in improving public spaces in neighbourhoods and cities to make them safer and more appealing to walk and cycle in.* Government doesn't: *The Scottish Government supports the recommendation to make our towns, cities and neighbourhoods safer and more appealing to walk and cycle in.*
 - **Recommendations relate to an area where government already has a lot to talk about** eg No 44 *Fulfil the carbon sink potential of the marine environment to establish an holistic enterprise that maximises carbon sequestration and supports sustainable marine food production.* The headline response is The Scottish Government supports the recommendation to fulfil the carbon sink potential of the marine environment and is funding a programme of work through the Scottish Blue Carbon Forum to develop our understanding of Scotland's blue carbon systems to enable policy action. Strangely there is no mention of salmon farming.
 - **Recommendations relate to individual behaviour change** – in particular public education campaigns related to diet and transport
- **Government 'supports in principle' or broadly agrees with a further 17 (21%)** – see more below
- **Unable to act due to reserved powers or need to act in concert with other parts of the UK** (10 responses, 12%)

Government response is 'supports in principle' or broadly agrees, usually when:

- **Targets are involved** – 7 Recommendations in all. Typical is no 13: *Ensure the Fuel Poverty Strategy, as required by the Fuel Poverty (Targets, Definition and Strategy) (Scotland) Act (2019) but currently still in its 2018 draft form, is implemented immediately and is effective by 2030 not 2040.* Response is: The Scottish Government supports the principle of the Assembly's recommendation to ensure the Fuel Poverty Strategy is implemented immediately and for it to be effective as early as possible. Basically whenever the Assembly put forward a target the govt response was to water it down. See also No.
- **When they don't have adequate power** – or want to move in line with other UK govts.
- **Technology doesn't exist** – eg to decarbonise ferry fleet by 2030. And yet what could they do to incentivise this as they commit to incentivising lots of other things like low/no emission aviation

- **Wants to further consult** – as with building standards. Risk of this being a case of ensuring that nothing done to damage commercial interests of their supporters. E.g Goal 4: *Lead by example through government and the public sector implementing mandatory standards, regulations and business practices that meet the urgency and scale of the climate emergency.* Headline response: *Following analysis of the Assembly's recommendations, the Scottish Government will take the following actions: We will consult on measures to support businesses in transitioning to net zero including, for large businesses, annual public disclosure of how climate change will affect their business. We will consult on requiring a published carbon management plan for achieving emissions reductions at a level consistent with Scotland's 2045 net zero target for businesses receiving grant or loan / equity funding of over £500,000 and for major contracts.*
- **More challenging ideas apparently accommodated but actually watered down.** eg. Universal Basic Income – not feasible but trying something similar within current paradigms; Goal 16: *Reframe the national focus and vision for Scotland's future away from economic growth and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in order to reflect climate change goals towards the prioritisation of a more person and community centred vision of thriving people, thriving communities and thriving climate.* Govt response: *What we measure matters, and delivering a well-being economy will mean looking beyond GDP to measure things that people value – the quality of jobs, the health of citizens and the impact of economic activity on our environment. Scotland is already leading the way on this work and we have made well-being an explicit part of our national purpose as a country, underpinning our National Performance Framework.*

Their interpretation is that there is not a lot that's challenging or difficult for them here.

- **Understood to be an endorsement of the government's current trajectory:**
 "The Assembly's recommendations demonstrate the underlying desire by the public for us to transition to a net zero and climate ready nation as we develop and grow our economy. We want to support businesses to innovate and change to realise these economic opportunities." Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Economy, Kate Forbes MSP
- **Followed by support for further CAs** – From the overall response to recommendation 49 on community engagement: "An expert working group has been established to set out how the use of deliberative processes can be made a routine part of policymaking and public service processes in Scotland. These recommendations will help guide the Scottish Government's approach to future citizens assemblies and other engagement, and will reinforce the need to consider how this will support engagement within a community setting."

There is evidence that Assembly not well served by the facilitation and design:

- **Duplication and overlap in recommendations:** Several currently getting at the same topic – e.g. 3 related to broadband/wifi/connectivity; 3 to frequent flyers/cost impact of aviation. Why didn't they come together to make one single recommendation?

- **Inconsistency in recommendations** – some groups clearly pressing for urgency and pushing for 2030 targets, whereas most have no deadlines; some radical ideas like Universal Basic Income (No. 64) not really consistent with the tone of the rest.
- **Government says it can't act on 12% of recommendations as they relate to reserved powers.** In some cases, that's the reason given why govt is only agreeing in principle – in case of *taxation recommendations* this makes nearly all of them either redundant or a smoke-screen to hide behind. Why weren't they given access to experts who could help them look not only at targeted recommendations but also at the need for greater powers to tackle the underlying issues.
- **Have not been supported to think beyond current government paradigms.** This kind of language frequently used incentives frequently used (ie government changes the incentives through its systems and the market will respond); also target setting.

Overall Conclusion:

Government has abused the concept of an emergency (and ignored the intent of those calling for it to declare one). They are assuming a business as usual approach will be sufficient and is actually an opportunity in terms of the problematic economic growth model. They've debased the value of Citizens Assemblies by turning them into very expensive focus group discussions just to test the public tolerance for different kinds of policy options. We've been badly served by civil servants who took the concept and dumbed it down, and then when citizens themselves showed glimmers of the way forward (despite a process that was practically designed to prevent that) further dumbing it down by ignoring their intent and cherry picking the most comfortable and unchallenging ways forwards

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