

## SDC response to National Framework for Greater Citizen engagement

The Sustainable Development Commission (SDC) welcomes the Ministry of Justice's (MoJ) *National Framework for Greater Citizen Engagement* discussion paper. Good governance is one of the UK Government's five principles for sustainable development as set out in *Securing the Future*<sup>1</sup>; as such we support the paper's recognition of the relationship between participative processes and representative democracy. This is the first time the relationship has been openly debated by Government and it is an impressive first step towards enshrining the use of participative processes within UK governance.

However, the paper must only be considered as a first step; significantly more needs to be done to successfully address the issues raised in the discussion paper before any decisions are made. Engagement mechanisms have been used for many years and there is a robust body of practice and evidence that should inform the debate.

The SDC's response to the paper draws on our extensive experience of deliberative engagement and policy-making in the context of sustainable development, which we have referenced throughout as appropriate.

We believe that addressing the high-level purpose, structure and content of the Framework over the next few months will be essential to embedding participation within UK governance. In addition to offering some views below, the SDC would therefore welcome the chance to explore the key issues with you and other key stakeholders and citizens further.

### Summary of the SDC's response

#### 1. The drivers for engagement: genuine influence

- The core objective of the discussion paper is how to use participative processes to *renew trust in representative democracy*. The SDC believes that this will only be achieved if two more fundamental issues are considered: 1) how to make *better decisions* (informed by the full range of views and interests) and 2) how to enable *better delivery* of those decisions (through greater understanding and empowerment by all those required to implement the decisions).
- By considering these better public services and empowerment drivers for greater collaboration between the public and the state, alongside those for democratic renewal, the enquiry becomes how can *genuine*, democratic influence be brought to bear on key decisions, and how can fully considered change be implemented. It is through the achievement of these two aims that our democracy will become once again relevant and immediate, avoiding potentially tokenistic approaches to 'building trust'. The approach we advocate has been termed '*decision specific*'

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<sup>1</sup> HMG. *Securing the Future* (2005) <http://www.sustainable-development.gov.uk/publications/uk-strategy/index.htm> p.16 "Promoting Good Governance - actively promoting effective, participative systems of governance in all levels of society..."

*democracy*, whereby a full range of views and interests inform a decision, the decision and need for that decision are widely accepted and understood, and the full range of actors are empowered to implement the results. *Section 1 of our response explores these issues in more detail.*

## **2. Pressures for decision specific democracy**

- The argument for decision-specific democracy is heightened by the recognition of an additional pressure on representative democracy; the changing nature of the decisions required and the need for cross-society involvement in profound transitions in social, economic, environmental and cultural life. It is not just the changing nature of our society and attitudes to authority and democracy as listed in Chapter 2 of the discussion paper, but the very nature of issues and decisions that we are addressing that have fundamentally changed. This recognition highlights that more national issues than listed could benefit from public participation. Decision specific democratic arrangements are a way of ensuring our democratic decision making (and implementation) processes are commensurate with the task.

*Section 2 of our response explores these issues in more detail.*

## **3. Techniques in their place: placement, definition and principles**

- Whether or not this wider set of drivers for citizen engagement are accepted within the Framework remit, the *first step* in considering engagement alongside representative democracy must be to understand how, where and when participative input best fits within the policy making cycle (in a way that improves decision making/implementation). The paper addresses this first step in some detail for referenda/petitions, but there is little in the paper about the ‘place’ of the other engagement mechanisms. Last year we carried out some research with Involve<sup>2</sup> to address this very issue, and in Section 3 of our response we offer a framework for adding this first step – which we call *placement*. We also recommend that placement should consider how engagement can be enshrined within central governance systems.
- Once the ‘place(s)’ of engagement within governance and the policy making cycle has been agreed, the *second step* is to consider the *definition of* and *principles* for ensuring effective deliberative processes within that placement. A cohesive set of definitions, principles and criteria, including understanding the range of deliberative processes available and how deliberative processes can link with other engagement mechanisms (like petitions and referenda), is essential. We suggest that the current set of principles<sup>3</sup> could be improved by drawing from current thinking and practice. In *Section 3 of our response* we include some examples of existing principles and criteria that could be used as a starting point, and suggest how petitions may be used as a trigger for deliberation.

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<sup>2</sup> Involve. *Engage for change* (2007), <http://www.sd-commission.org.uk/publications.php?id=618>

<sup>3</sup> *Discussion paper*, page 12

#### 4. Engagement mechanisms (and techniques)

- In terms of the specific engagement mechanisms (and techniques), the SDC considers citizens' juries and citizens' summits to be valid forms of engagement suited to some circumstances. However, there is no evidence to suggest that they have special validity or are better value for money than any other of the plethora of engagement techniques available. In *Section 4 of our response* we argue that although we very much support the enshrining of deliberative engagement within the MoJ Framework, and the principles for effective practice, there should be *no restriction* in terms of particular technique or techniques that can be used.
- Instead, we argue that deliberative techniques should be designed and chosen according to the requirements of each attempt at engagement (even if the 'space' or 'placement' for that engagement has been defined as in section 3). This may sometimes include online methods rather than face to face, small groups rather than large groups, ongoing groups rather than one off and so on. In Section 4 we provide some illustrative examples of other techniques that could be used, including the most useful technique of all, which is tailor-making designs fit for purpose. Our aim in this section is to highlight the more varied and extensive toolkit of methods which the Framework should encompass; without this there is a danger Government will be tied to outmoded and/or increasingly expensive techniques.
- In Section 4 we also suggest a number of tools and methods that could be used to help inform 'good process design', ensuring that a particular engagement process is fit for purpose, including the SDC's own design guide<sup>4</sup>. We draw on current work and research to suggest the need for capacity building and incentives to address the tendency for government to resist forms of engagement that go beyond sophisticated communications exercises and end of pipe consultation.
- Finally, as part of 'good design', new forms of communication, including the blogosphere and media involvement, will need to be addressed in order that the Framework is up to date and able to reach out to the numbers of citizens required<sup>5</sup>. For example, what is the potential role of the media in 'up scaling' engagement (educating the nation), providing communication channels and enabling a wider set of citizens to engage in understanding (and inputting to) policy-making? We highlight some work by the Sciencewise Expert Resource Centre that could inform this thinking.

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<sup>4</sup> SDC. *Planning and designing engagement processes* (2008), <http://www.sd-commission.org.uk/publications.php?id=680#publicationRatings>

<sup>5</sup> Involve. *Critical Mass* (2007). This research draws on recent evaluations of engagements such as GM Nation, COWRM Waste Dialogue, Your Health Your Care Your Say and concludes that between 1-4% of the population need to be reached to create political traction - 'critical mass'. This would mean between 600,000 and 2.5m people or of voters in the last election 400,000 to 1.5 million.

## **5. Scoping study proposal: Citizens Council for the Future**

The SDC believes that one way to implement the framework successfully and address the issues outlined above would be to implement a high-profile space for citizens to engage with and inform long-term thinking. In Section 5 we give details of our proposal to scope the concept of such a space (provisionally called a *Citizens' Council for the Future*).

## SDC's detailed response

### 1 The drivers for engagement: genuine influence

The main driver for the Framework is democratic renewal, arguing that using more participative techniques at a national level will help revitalise understanding of and *trust* in *representative democracy* in ways which don't threaten the existing decision making powers of our representatives.

The SDC is concerned that focusing the Framework on assisting with democratic renewal alone could limit its effectiveness; there is a danger that it will lead to 'trust-building' exercises conducted for their own sake as an extension to PR or communications exercises. Instead, democratic renewal must be considered alongside the other two main strategic fundamental drivers of participative engagement<sup>6</sup>

- **Empowerment and ownership** – enabling people to develop skills and networks to implement and change what really matters to them.
- **Effectiveness and delivery** – enabling more informed, robust, better decisions, and building potential for co-creation and co-delivery.

One way of conceptualising how participative processes can be usefully included within representative democracy is '**decision specific**' **democracy**. Decision specific democracy goes further than reassuring MPs and citizens about the vitality of democracy. It considers participatory processes as ways of ensuring individual (Government) decisions are effective and better informed (by the full range of views and interests), and implemented more efficiently/effectively (by empowering all those required to act).

It contrasts with representative democracy in that it is about relating engagement (of citizens, consumers, stakeholders) to specific decisions. The engagement is about getting the best information, the widest set of perspectives, the most affected or most required to act involved in shaping and implementing the decision. To reach its full potential, it must go further 'upstream' than simple consultation at late stages in decision making, to engage with those who have influence, information or who will be affected by a decision at earlier stages in the policy making cycle (see section 3 below). Examples of such forms of engagement at a national level are the UK Sustainable Development Strategy (using online deliberative methods); the National Pensions Debate (using face to face methods)<sup>7</sup>. The SDC itself has run a large-scale forum on sustainable consumption (I Will if You Will)<sup>8</sup>, conducted and evaluated a large-scale deliberative process on tidal power<sup>9</sup> and has run two 'upstream'

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<sup>6</sup> SDC. *Position on Engagement*, (2008), [http://www.sd-commission.org.uk/publications/downloads/position\\_on\\_engagement.pdf](http://www.sd-commission.org.uk/publications/downloads/position_on_engagement.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> DWP. *National Pensions Debate* (2006), <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/pensionsreform/debate/>

<sup>8</sup> SDC. *I Will if You Will – Towards Sustainable Consumption* - <http://www.sd-commission.org.uk/publications.php?id=367>

<sup>9</sup> Shared Practice. *Evaluation of SDC Tidal Power report*,(2007), Summary on SDC web-pages, full report available from SDC on request.

online deliberative consultations<sup>10</sup> to set policy agenda that were evaluated by MoJ's Digital Dialogues programme.

Referenda are an example of a technique that can be used for decision-specific democracy, but they must be seen as only one possible – and high risk – approach. The proposals in the Framework indicate that it is unlikely referenda will be undertaken; the SDC believe this reinforces the need for more 'upstream' deliberative engagement on specific decisions.

In order to encompass use of deliberative engagement within decision-specific democracy, the Framework needs to cover:

- **Placement** –how, where and when deliberative processes can usefully fit within governance and policy-making.
- **Definition** – what a deliberative engagement process is, the full range of approaches
- **Principles** – guidelines for use of deliberative engagement methods.

We discuss each of these issues in more detail in sections below.

## 2 Pressures for decision specific democracy

Chapter 2 of the discussion paper sets out a useful analysis of representative democracy and engagement, including new pressures on representative democracy such as the decline in membership of political parties, low rates of participation amongst disadvantaged groups and the reduction in deference. An additional set of pressures should be added to this analysis - the changing nature of the decisions and actions required of our democracy, not least the need to mobilise society. As Tom Bentley puts it:

*“Over the next generation our societies will have to negotiate profound transitions in social, economic and cultural life.... The fundamental question for twenty-first century politics is how to combine market economies with other kinds of value – social, cultural, environmental, public and moral – in ways that sustain our societies and our natural environment, and align economic production with human need. ... First, we need systems of decision-making and organisation capable of helping to make the choices visible, or transparent – to connect the act of individual choice with the wider, collective consequences. Second, we need to create regular opportunities for people to think, talk, learn and decide together about the issues over which they are making choices”<sup>11</sup>*

The Framework for citizen engagement must acknowledge the pressure for change resulting from the growing uncertainty, urgency and complexity of issues that need to be addressed. It

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<sup>10</sup> [http://www.sd-commission.org.uk/pages/panel\\_opinion.html](http://www.sd-commission.org.uk/pages/panel_opinion.html)

<sup>11</sup> Demos. *Everyday Democracy*, (2004), p.16  
<http://www.demos.co.uk/publications//everydaydemocracy>

also needs to address the pressure to involve citizens (alongside other stakeholders such as NGOs, business, communities) in mobilising society to implement changes. Finally, it needs to address the pressure to be able to tackle issues requiring major, whole-systems change and/or long time frames for implementation. Climate change is an obvious example, as are issues such as transport, health care and immigration.

If this wider conception of pressures for change is taken into account, it broadens the scope of issues that ‘could benefit from greater public participation’<sup>12</sup>. In addition to *issues which will result in significant constitutional change*, engagement would be required for issues that require any ‘*profound transition*’ (including but not limited to complex/difficult trade offs and those that require individual actions). A classic example would be the Making Space for Water (inland and on the coast) strategy<sup>13</sup>, which will affect millions, and will require buy-in and action from citizens and stakeholders to be feasible, informed and effective. If referenda are off the political agenda, it becomes even more important to consider how to use engaged methods to work with the public to make and implement decisions. The SDC sees the Framework as an opportunity for participation to help achieve sustainable solutions and go beyond referenda, which can be limited in their ‘deliberative’ potential<sup>14</sup>.

### 3. Techniques in their place

#### 3.1 Placement

As noted in the first section, there is a significant gap in the paper’s analysis of how engagement mechanisms can and should fit with each other, with the policy making cycle and with governance structures.

The SDC has been involved in a number of initiatives to address the fit with policy-making, including our own research<sup>15</sup>, advising on Defra’s policy cycle and the ‘Deliberative Public Engagement’ principles published by Involve/NCC. Our conclusion is that deliberative engagement can be useful at all stages in policy making, including:

- **Policy determination** / agenda setting - the point at which an issue is initially identified as being of concern
- **Policy direction** - the point at which the process for tackling the issue and potential outcomes are set
- **Policy design** – planning the key elements of the desired outcomes and how to achieve them

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<sup>12</sup> Discussion paper, p.11

<sup>13</sup> Defra, *Making Space for Water engagement strategy*  
<http://www.defra.gov.uk/environ/fcd/policy/strategy/sd6.htm>

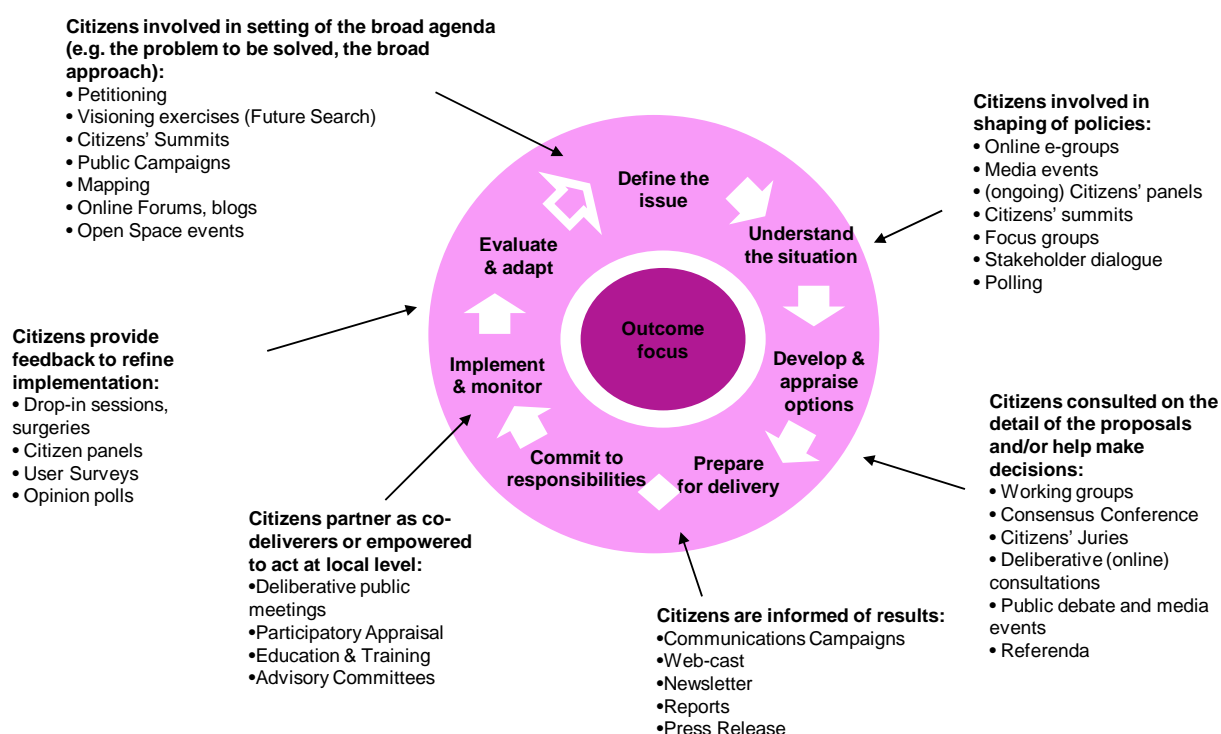
<sup>14</sup> A recent referendum in Queensland, Australia on use of recycled water during the drought illustrates the point well: A referendum returned a ‘no’ vote, but then a blogging campaign – with both sides participating and exploring the full range of views in a deliberative way - resulted in a ‘yes’ the second time round. <http://4350water.blogspot.com/2008/09/4350water-blog-recent-search-terms.html>

<sup>15</sup> Involve. *Engage for change* (2007), p8-25

- **Policy delivery** - implementation, monitoring and review.

Figure 1 below provides a little more detail and starts to indicate the kinds of deliberative processes that might be appropriate at different stages in the policy making cycle:

**Figure 1 - Policy-making and engagement (based on Defra RENEW policy cycle)**



It is important to note that in contrast to the full range of opportunities for deliberative input to decision making, research shows the vast majority of engagement undertaken by Government is either informing citizens and communities<sup>16</sup> or 'end-of-pipe' consultation<sup>17</sup>. These types of consultations are not only limited in their impact (on the decision) but also in terms of their relevance to citizens (as by then it will be far too detailed for most to be able to comment). It is clear that the Framework needs to address the issues which currently encourage the tendency towards consultation and awareness-raising exercises. We return to this in later sections. The SDC's research, capacity building and practice findings may help

<sup>16</sup> Ministry of Justice. *Engagement Stocktake* (14/01/2008); used as evidence in original DA (PED) draft strategic framework for engagement and empowerment

<sup>17</sup> Barnett, Dr Julie (University of Surrey). *Making Consultation Meaningful* (2007)  
<http://www.psy.surrey.ac.uk/people/staff/J.Barnett/pub/Making%20consultation%20meaningful.pdf>



to inform the way this could be done and we'd welcome the opportunity to discuss this further.

Another fundamental aspect of placement is how participative processes can be *enshrined within governance systems*. A centrally enshrined space could be key to the Framework fulfilling the fundamental drivers of engagement; it could significantly help for a more joined up approach on a range of policy issues and mobilise a critical mass of citizens. While there is no existing model for such a space, there is a growing body of evidence of one-off examples to learn from, such as the citizens' assemblies in Canada<sup>18</sup> and Australia's 2020 Summit<sup>19</sup>. The SDC suggests that more work is done to understand the benefits and practicalities of a high-profile, ongoing central space for citizen participation (as outlined in our Citizens' Council for the Future proposal).

### 3.2 Linking petitions to deliberative engagement

Figure 1 can also be used to illustrate a potential synergy between the use of petitions and the use of deliberative engagement. If sufficient interest is identified via a petition for putting an issue 'on the agenda', a deliberative citizens' process could be instigated which enables citizens (and stakeholders) to work alongside Government to define the issue, understand the situation, develop and appraise options and so on. This process would be very different to the 'established' process whereby Government is usually called on to 'respond' to a petition – establishing an adversarial interaction by which the petition makers shed responsibility for finding solutions on to Government.

If a petition were a signal to instigate a deliberative process, instead of stimulating a Government response, it would have at least three benefits:

- (i) Awareness raising opportunity relating to the complexity of the issue, the range of views, the need (or not) for action, the existing policies and plans
- (ii) Reduced risk of disillusionment (and increased campaigning) that would accompany a strong rebuttal response from Government
- (iii) Opportunity to share responsibility for tough decisions with other informants, actors and implementers.

It is important to note that in this process, the final (informed and better understood) decision would still rest with politicians. For example, the recent No 10 petition on road-pricing could have instigated a deliberative process that informed policy-making and built trust in the decision, instead of leading to a rebuttal/counter attack campaign.

The question of what 'instigates' or 'justifies' a deliberative process is a critical one and we suggest further work is to be done on this including how to:

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<sup>18</sup> <http://www.citizensassembly.bc.ca/public/inaction> , <http://www.citizensassembly.gov.on.ca/en-CA/About.aspx>

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.australia2020.gov.au>

- a) take into account the public demand for debate (e.g. by using petitions with 'x' amount of responses to set the agenda for public engagement processes)
- b) consider the value that deliberative engagement will add to democracy, effective decision-making and empowering citizens and Government.

In section 5, we propose a scoping study for a potential '*Citizens Council for the Future*' which could help to address these questions.

### 3.3 Definition of deliberative engagement

In recommending deliberative engagement, it is important to clearly define what constitutes a deliberative approach to engagement. The SDC helped produce the recent Involve/NCC 'Deliberative Public Engagement, Nine Principles'<sup>20</sup>. This document sets out very clearly that deliberative public engagement is a distinctive approach to involving people in decision-making. It is different from other forms of engagement in that it is about giving participants time to consider and discuss an issue in depth before they come to a considered view.

It is important to recognise that the notion of deliberation – of a range of people learning, discussing and working out solutions together - is not new. Forums, advisory groups, partnerships and some forms of consultation have done this for years and are becoming increasingly sophisticated. More recently, initiatives such as citizens' juries and large scale citizens' summits have found favour as a key element in public engagement by Government and public service providers at local and national levels. What is clear from these initiatives is that deliberative public engagement has particular value in creating better public services, promoting social cohesion and fostering a thriving democracy.

However, although there is already good practice throughout the UK, the full potential contribution of deliberation to improving the quality of decisions and policy solutions, and to enhancing representative democracy, is only now becoming apparent, creating an ideal opportunity for the Framework to set out the way forward clearly.

As part of setting out a clear way forward, the Framework needs to state explicitly what makes a process deliberative. The SDC considers that in order to be deliberative, a process must involve:

- **Discussion between participants** at interactive events (including through online technologies). The events are designed to provide the resources, time and space for participants to consider and learn from information provided, work closely with 'experts', explore their own views, listen to and consider the views of others, and discuss the issues together to come to a 'considered' view which may (or may not) be different from their original view.
- **Working with a range of people and information sources**, including information, evidence and views from different (and often opposing) perspectives, backgrounds and interests. This may include evidence directly requested or commissioned by participants themselves. Discussions are managed to ensure that a diversity of views

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<sup>20</sup> Involve/NCC. *Deliberative Public Engagement: Nine Principles (2008)*  
[http://www.ncc.org.uk/nccpdf/poldocs/NCC208\\_nine\\_principles\\_engagement.pdf](http://www.ncc.org.uk/nccpdf/poldocs/NCC208_nine_principles_engagement.pdf)

from people with different perspectives are included, that minority or disadvantaged groups are not excluded, and that discussions are not dominated by any particular faction.

- **A clear task or purpose**, related to influencing a specific decision, policy, service, project or programme.

The Framework must also recognise, and distinguish, between the three main types of deliberative engagement in the UK:

- **Deliberative research**, which builds on market research techniques, through which research agencies research and report on public views on an issue to a research client (such as a Government department). Examples include national citizens' summits and policy consultations<sup>21</sup>.
- **Deliberative dialogue**, which builds on dialogue and consensus building methods to enable participants to work together (often alongside expert input) to develop an agreed view that participants are then involved in taking forward to decision makers, potentially leading to future shared responsibility for implementation. Examples include national dialogues on science and technology<sup>22</sup>.
- **Deliberative decision making**, which builds on partnership methodologies to enable participants and decision makers to jointly decide on priorities and programmes. Examples include partnerships and participatory budgeting exercises with genuine devolved power.

These three types overlap significantly and a single process may involve more than one type. Similarly, there is no implied hierarchy here – each type may be appropriate in different circumstances and the Framework should set out which are appropriate when during the policy making cycle.

### 3.4 Principles or criteria for effective deliberative engagement

Once the definition has been agreed, a set of principles or criteria is useful in clarifying how to run effective deliberative engagement processes (as distinct from which techniques to use). The criteria set out on page 12 of the MoJ discussion paper are a mix of reasons ranging from how engagement might be important to the public, what would make it acceptable to politicians and detailed 'how to' suggestions. The SDC recommends instead drawing closely on the existing comprehensive and consistent principles recently set out by other organisations such as SDC and COI (summarised below), but also NCC/Involve and ScienceWise.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> e.g. the UK Government national deliberative processes on the health and social care White Paper [http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH\\_4138622](http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_4138622), and on the future of pensions <http://www.workandpensions.gov.uk/pensionsreform/debate/>

<sup>22</sup> e.g. the UK Government Sciencewise programme <http://www.sciencewise.org.uk>

<sup>23</sup> SDC. *Engagement Principles (2008)* [http://www.sd-commission.org.uk/pages/tools\\_guidance.html](http://www.sd-commission.org.uk/pages/tools_guidance.html)  
COI. *Cross-government principles (30 April 2008)*. Commissioned by Cabinet Office  
Involve/NCC. *Deliberative Public Engagement: Nine Principles (2008)*

### SDC principles of effective engagement

**Clarity** – be clear on the aims and what's 'up for grabs'.

**Integration** - join up the process so it feeds into the policy decision

**Independence** – leads to trust in results and unbiased approach

**Tailored** – use different methods together appropriately

**Follow through** – evaluate and demonstrate how results were used

### COI cross-government principles

**Strategy and planning**

**Clarity of framing**

**Transparency and responsiveness**

**Integrity of process**

**Access to engagement principles**

Any such criteria or principles must be accompanied by both instigation/justification guidelines and practical steps for officials to follow.

## 4. Engagement mechanisms

### 4.1 Designed and fit for purpose

The form of a deliberative process, the way it is designed and the techniques used, must depend on the circumstances<sup>24</sup>, such as:

- The **purpose** of the process including the nature and status of the results (how much influence might they have on the decision), and where in the policy making cycle will the process will fit
- The types, characteristic and numbers of **people** to be involved (more is not necessarily better, a representative sample may not always be what is required); any particular geographical, socio-economic, interests that need to be covered; any particular expertise that needs to be present in order to have informed discussions
- The **timescale** of the decision making (how long is available for the engagement)
- The characteristics of the **subject** to be considered including how complex, contentious or technical the topic is, the rate or extent of possible change and on whom.

These factors must be included in designing an effective and efficient deliberative process; it is simply not possible to stipulate which exact technique or techniques should be applied

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ScienceWise. *Government Approach to Public Dialogue*. (23 May 2008)

<http://www.sciencewise-erc.org.uk/cms/public-dialogue-2/>

<sup>24</sup> For guidance on how to design public engagement processes, see for example:

<http://www.peopleandparticipation.net/display/ProcessPlanner/Scope+Introduction> or

<http://www.involve.org.uk/evaluation>

across the board. The SDC is therefore concerned at the paper promoting two particular techniques; citizens' summits and citizens' juries. While both citizens' summits and citizens' juries are valid deliberative forms of engagement – and evaluation has shown similar deliberative events have positive effects on the participants willingness to be active citizens in the future<sup>25</sup> - there are other issues specific to them that should be considered in more detail. For example, there is still very little evidence that 'scaling up' deliberative events (e.g. from 20 to 200 to 5000 participants) adds any real value<sup>26</sup>; this is an area that the ScienceWise programme is currently investigating<sup>27</sup>. There are also questions about the value for money of these techniques, and there are significant variations within the use of the techniques themselves (e.g. compare America Speaks with Opinion Leaders' interpretation of citizens' summits).

What's more, the techniques will only be as useful as the context they are used in. For example, if a citizens' jury is given a decision to make (or a decision to which Government must respond) openly and formally then it could be seen as a process that renews democracy and empowers people. However, if it is just used as a deliberative research tool then it is little more than running an informed focus group. We have already seen Government departments acting in anticipation of the Framework, stipulating the use of juries and summits when they are not necessarily the most appropriate (and not the most cost effective) method of engagement for the issues and purposes involved.

#### **4.2 The full range of different methods of deliberation**

Instead of promoting one or two particular 'methods', the Framework should recognise that deliberative public engagement processes can take place on any scale, from around ten participants (e.g. citizens' juries) to thousands of participants (e.g. citizens' summits). They may take the form of a one-off process, or a series of activities running over several years. Figure 2 illustrates how different approaches suit different numbers and timescales.

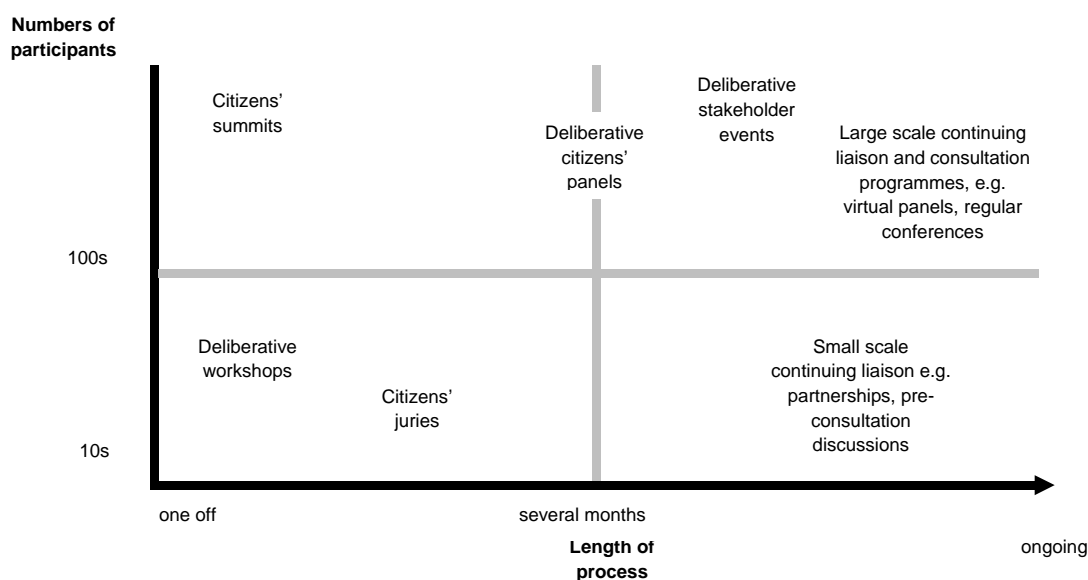
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<sup>25</sup> Shared Practice. *Evaluation of SDC Tidal Power report*,(2007), p. 50: "As a result of being involved in this process, participants were more willing to get involved in discussions on policy issues in future"

<sup>26</sup> Involve. *Critical Mass* (2007) which concludes that a critical mass is between 1 and 4 % of the population, significantly more than is engaged directly or indirectly through citizens summits and juries

<sup>27</sup> ref <http://www.sciencewise-erc.org.uk/cms/mass-engagement/>

**Figure 2 – Map of different deliberative engagement methods**



As well as juries and summits, below are just some of the techniques that should be considered by the Framework<sup>28</sup>:

- **Consensus Conference** - made up of a panel of citizens who question expert witnesses on a particular topic at a public conference. Their recommendations are then circulated widely
- **Drop-in sessions and surgeries** (online and face to face) Using facilitation expertise to make these events interactive (two way) rather than one way information giving
- **Online Deliberative Consultation** - ongoing, multi-staged, online events that Allow participants to inform and understand decision processes, as used by SDC stakeholder panel
- **Co-production models** - this rejects the traditional understanding of service users as dependents of public services, and instead redefines the service-user (or Government-citizen) relationship as one of co-dependency and collaboration. In practice, it means that those who are affected by a service or a decision are involved at every stage of making or designing it.
- **Future Search conference** - a way for a community or organisation to create a shared vision for its future. It engages a large group of stakeholders who take part in a highly structured process lasting ideally two and a half days

<sup>28</sup> For a comprehensive list visit [www.peopleandparticipation.net](http://www.peopleandparticipation.net)

- **Open space** - Open Space Technology is often referred to as "Open Space". It is a meeting framework that allows unlimited numbers of participants to form their own discussions around a central theme.

In truth, while deliberative processes may well use elements of 'named' techniques above - combined in ways that make the approach suitable for the given topic, decision, people and timeframe - they require a *tailor-made design* in order to ensure they are fit for purpose.

More examples of national level engagement should also be sought from other countries when developing the Framework. As well as the ongoing, well-established format of America Speaks there have been initiatives from other countries such as last year's French 'le Grenelle on the environment'<sup>29</sup> or Australia's 2020 summit<sup>30</sup>.

### 4.3 New forms of communication and the media

Up until now there has been little attention paid to the involvement of the new or traditional media - whether it be the blogosphere, press, TV or online. Media involvement is usually confined to commenting on policy-making and the shaping opinion from the outside rather than directly contribute to the process of enabling people to be part of the deliberation. However, there are examples where this has started to change, such as the Queensland water campaign cited earlier<sup>31</sup>.

This is a new and evolving field, and subject to research - for example, see the 'mass engagement' work-stream of Sciencewise<sup>32</sup>. The Framework should actively look at new ways to design in the use of new and traditional media in three main ways:

- how new processes can be designed and run collaboratively to reach a critical mass of millions (e.g. participative tv programmes, deliberative online consultations)<sup>33</sup>.
- how to harness existing debate and opinion 'bottom up', in a systematic manner (e.g. from online blogs, facebook groups)
- how to alert people to central Government deliberative processes (press ads, stories, TV broadcasts of events)

### 4.4 Capacity to design and deliver good deliberative engagement processes

In order to genuinely encourage effective use of deliberative engagement, the Framework should include, or at minimum, point to, practical steps and tips on how to design engagement processes. This could link to existing guidance such as the SDC four-step

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.legrenelle-environnement.fr/grenelle-environnement/spip.php?rubrique112>

<sup>30</sup> <http://www.australia2020.gov.au/>

<sup>31</sup> <http://4350water.blogspot.com/2008/09/4350water-blog-recent-search-terms.html>

<sup>32</sup> <http://www.sciencewise-erc.org.uk/cms/science-communicators-and-the-media>

<sup>33</sup> c.f. Involve's submission to MoJ Democratic Engagement Branch entitled *Tele-participation*

guide<sup>34</sup>, People and Participation process planner<sup>35</sup>, or the Dialogue by Design version<sup>36</sup>  
Good process design requires going through the following steps:

- 1) **Initial assessment** of whether the approach should be extensive, moderate or light-touch
- 2) **Why** you need to work with others
- 3) **Who** do you need to engage with (which citizens and stakeholders)
- 4) **Planning** the engagement process

In addition to providing the tools for good process design, there is a need to build capacity in Government for deliberative engagement. SDC's research<sup>37</sup> shows that working in an engaged way is not the 'natural stomping ground' of all civil servants or politicians, and if left without incentives and/or new skills and processes, engagement will continue to be restricted to better communication, PR and end-of-pipe consultation. There is more work being done in this area (for example ScienceWise<sup>38</sup> study into organisational readiness and the National School of Government's launch of public engagement courses) but the issue needs to be addressed by MoJ; if not, there is a significant risk that initiatives launched under the Framework's banner are not successfully implemented or appear to be 'add-ons' to the current way of doing things, rather than a genuine change at the heart of our democratic processes.

## 5. Scoping study proposal: Citizens Council for the Future

The SDC believes there is a 'place' needed in our governance arrangements (provisionally called a *Citizens' Council for the Future*) in which UK citizens can consider long term issues and inform the work of politicians, business and civil society. We believe that such a high-profile space for citizens to engage with and inform long-term thinking would be a positive and significant step to implementing a successful *National Framework for Citizen Engagement*.

We suggest a collaborative scoping project to explore the concept of such a space would prove valuable either now or once the Framework is more developed. The scoping project would look to deliver a series of options (in particular around the placement and design of a deliberative space) that would give Government a steer on how such a Citizens' Council could work in practice. It would also look at cost implications and potential benefits of

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<sup>34</sup> <http://www.sd-commission.org.uk/publications.php?id=680#publicationRatings>

<sup>35</sup> <http://peopleandparticipation.net/display/ProcessPlanner/Home>

<sup>36</sup> <http://designer.dialoguebydesign.net/>

<sup>37</sup> Involve. *Engage for change* (2007), p.26 onwards <http://www.sd-commission.org.uk/publications.php?id=618>

<sup>38</sup> <http://www.sciencewise-erc.org.uk/cms/organisational-readiness/>



various models – from the basic (costing tens of thousands of pounds) to the ‘Rolls Royce’ (millions of pounds) and options in between.

Undertaking this study would also enable further work to be done on the many issues we have raised in this submission, providing MoJ with a number of options and ideas from which to pick and choose. The SDC submitted a full proposal to MoJ (Governance of Britain team and Democratic Engagement Branch) CLG and Cabinet Office for consideration in August 2008.

Sustainable Development Commission

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