

October 2023

A monthly summary of consultation matters by Consultation Guru – Rhion Jones.

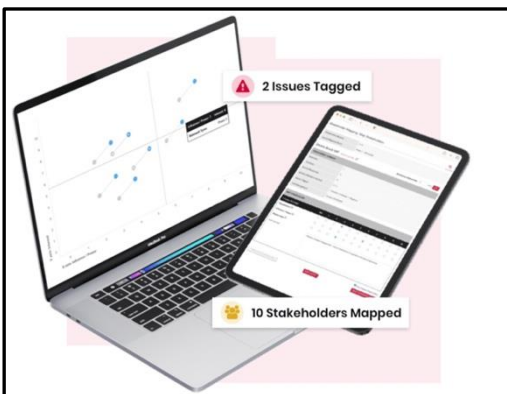
Consultation Catch-up



On September 19th, I joined 150 others for [Community Energy England's](#) Summer Conference, and heard encouraging news about the growing number of grassroots initiatives in the energy sector. Here I was joined (left) by Ollie Pendred, Chief Exec of [Community Energy South](#), and we are currently working together on the best ways to advise and motivate local Councillors who want to make a difference in their areas. Both Government and Opposition say they want to encourage these self-help groups everywhere, and as of the time of writing, the Prime Minister has not sought to undermine it! So, it is all systems go, and we need officers and elected members everywhere to look carefully at these opportunities.

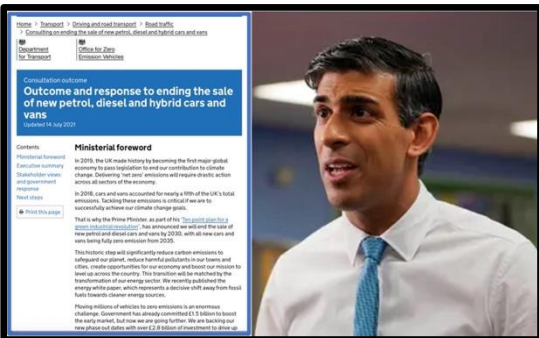
Best of the Blogs

[Precision in public engagement: Why Stakeholder Mapping counts more than ever](#)



Sitting down to prepare an inspirational (!!) talk at [Tractivity's 10th October Stakeholder Engagement Summit](#) in Birmingham - and realising that we don't shout loudly enough about this simple but effective technique. If you experience a really good piece of public engagement or consultation - without there having been a stakeholder mapping exercise, it's just a happy accident. My latest thoughts explain that part of the magic of stakeholder mapping is being able to view an issue from the 'consultee' perspective

If you consult before MAKING policy, should you consult before CHANGING policy?



Did you realise that the 2030 deadline re petrol/diesel cars was following an impressive 2020 consultation? I wonder if Rishi Sunak ever read it! Regardless ... he should have engaged/consulted with a range of stakeholders before his U-turn. Just ask the motor industry ...

[Cambridge Congestion Charge cancelled – was consultation to blame?](#)



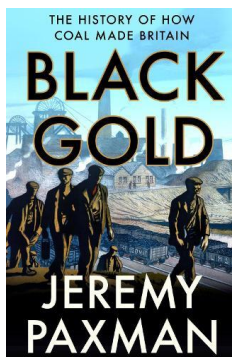
Not sure if Matthew Paris' Times article would be endorsed by any front-line politician, but the early skirmishes on ULEZ and now the events in Cambridge show how acrimonious the debate is becoming. Cambridge almost certainly needs a radical approach to transport, but consultations act as a lightning rod to galvanise opponents. What happened here? Read this and absorb the relevance of the Goodwin curve!!!

Instant insights

- Sarah Allan of [Involve](#) has written an important analysis of the emerging patterns of public engagement over climate-related issues. It is published by UPPER, a coalition of organisations working to ‘unlock the potential of public engagement to reach net zero’. As well as Involve, it includes Ashden, Climate Outreach and the Citizens Research Group of Lancaster University. The Report is called [What role for government; a practical guide to the types, roles and spaces of public engagement on climate](#). In recent years there has been a huge focus on innovative deliberative processes in various programmes and frameworks with little if any attention given to traditional tools like consultation. This is a thorough, professional, paper and defines (Category Three) processes that ‘invites or supports people to shape decision making – seeking input from members of the public ... etc’ and I hope to explore where exactly consultation fits in.
- Some months ago, I described the work of [KNOCA](#) - the European network for sharing best practice on the design and implementation of **Climate Assemblies**. Last week, I attended its Workshop on designing the necessary **follow-up** to such events. (See [here](#) for a 65 min video of the main presentation and conclusions) We heard excellent case-study style analysis of what happened after the [Scottish Climate Assembly](#) from Oliver Escobar and the irrepressible Doreen Grove, and it reinforces my view that part of the follow-up on such long-term issues must include consultation – to maintain the dialogue and engage an even wider public.
- Here’s the latest example of the pivotal role that consultation plays in policy development and why campaigners and lobbyists need to focus upon ways to influence Government departments as they prepare for such an exercise. In this instance, Martin Lewis of [Moneysavingexpert.com](#), a vociferous advocate of an **energy social tariff**, headed a coalition of 140 charities, consumer groups and MPs [calling on the Government to fulfil its repeated pledges to hold a consultation](#) on the subject. Promises to consult are regular ways Ministers play for time, and those seeking important changes now know how to sustain pressure and how the scope and style of the consultation will matter. I feel a consultancy assignment cropping up somewhere
- With Rishi Sunak furiously trying to position himself as the Motorist’s friend, much attention has been given to Wales’s move towards greater use of 20mph speed limits. Much is made of the democratic legitimacy of a policy only vaguely summarised in a nine-word sentence in Labour’s 2021 Senedd Manifesto. Equally interesting though is to read the [Welsh Government’s Response to the consultation](#) it ran on the proposal (5,607 analysed responses) and the lengths to which it goes to point out that public opinion research indicated far more support than its consultation revealed! Read for yourselves!

Straws in the wind

The Reading List



An unusual choice this month, but for anyone interested in the way that politics is shaped over the years by the immense influence of a major industry, this is fascinating. Even though I was reared on the culture of the South Wales coalfield and the tragedies that disfigured coal mining, the extent to which the industry powered the industrial revolution, and the British empire surprised me. Reading this 2022 account by a thoughtful journalist (his other books are good too) makes one reflect why it took so long to phase out such a polluting cause of climate change. But it also made me wonder if, at some point the overwhelming clout of today’s technology firms will not one day be shown similarly to have held Governments in thrall.

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