

March 2023

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

Out and About

Rhion meeting with newly-elected MP for West Lancashire, **Ashley Dalton** and **Baroness Sue Hayman**. Ashley undertook several of his training courses and is a strong supporter of the Consultation Institute. Sue is an ex-Associate of the Institute and is the Shadow spokesperson both for DEFRA and the Dept of Levelling up.



Rhion receiving a copy of **Dr Selin Calik's** book "The renaissance of smart energy" (See the Reading List below). Originally a journalist from Turkey, she is now an internationally recognised 'renewable energy scientist' and shares with Rhion a passion for public engagement in the cause of achieving net zero. They met at the Glasgow COP26 and hope to work together to help public bodies grasp these opportunities

Best of the Blogs



[Are we moving towards tougher legal requirements for 'stakeholder engagement'?](#)

To anyone conscious of the law of consultation - and the role it has played in enforcing higher standards - and to those involved with the wider world of public engagement, this matters. I have looked carefully at this recent judgment, and, although one must be cautious, I'm now fairly sure that it's a small but significant step towards rights to those who are 'engaged'



[Consultation and Campaigns – what exactly is the relationship?](#)

Political activists, local campaigners and lobbyists all appear to me to have a somewhat uncertain appreciation of the role of consultation in pursuing their aims. There's little academic treatment of the issue, so here is a modest attempt to put some pegs in the ground - Four points of analysis which policymakers, campaigners and the public affairs industry might consider.



[London's Ultra low emission zone faces challenge – with consultation under attack. Is this really the issue?](#)

Clean Air v Equitable treatment of low-income motorists. Sadiq Khan's proposed expansion of London's 'Ultra low emissions zone' is prompting legal challenges by four London Boroughs. I've looked at this – and the preceding consultation and I think we may need to invest more in 'Just Transition' strategies.

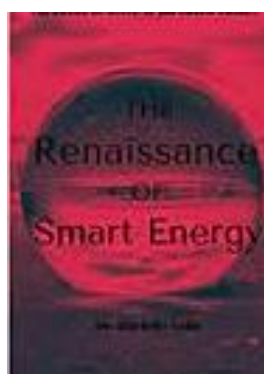
Instant insights

- Among the 'hard choices' that Governments have to make in the years ahead, **road-building** will surely be among the most contentious. This is already being played out In Wales following the publication of the Government's internationally-acclaimed Report, [The Future of Road investment in Wales](#). An expert review panel looked at 59 schemes, but only 15 will now go ahead. Its ambitious plans are to force a major switch of travel mode away from the private car. Critics, however, point out that this policy-making by diktat, with a complete absence of citizen involvement. A former Labour Transport Minister, Ken Skates complained that the Panel *'didn't actually engage with any communities'*. The Cardiff Government will no doubt respond that it had held a consultation on its overall transport strategy – published in 2021. However, the scrapping or massive change to 44 other schemes may leave thousands of local residents and businesses feeling aggrieved that the projects affecting them, and their locality should have been the subject of specific local consultation.
- The role that public engagement and consultation can play in the development of significant legislation is currently being illustrated in **Jersey**. Two years ago, it ran a Citizens' Jury on the question *Should **assisted dying** be permitted in Jersey, and if so, under what circumstances?* In consequence, the States Assembly decided in principle to proceed with an Assisted Dying Scheme. After a period of public engagement followed by a public consultation, the stage seems set for legislation this summer. A good account of the proposals, and the process leading up to them is available [here](#)

Straws in the wind

- Many Parliamentarians are deeply unhappy about the **Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Bill** In the House of Lords Second Reading debate, of those who spoke, it was about 3 to 1 against. The gist is that the Bill will sweep away thousands of secondary legislation and regulation and allow Ministers to replace them without any formal commitment to consult! In [my blog](#) on this subject, I argue that the politicians must do better and clarify when consultation is required – and when it is not. Right now, it is a mess.
- Amid the political turmoil that followed Nicola Sturgeon's announced departure, Scotland's long-lasting debate on fixing its chronic **alcohol problem** comes to a head on March 9th when the consultation on [Restricting alcohol advertising and promotion](#) closes. Watching the Scottish whisky industry in full cry is a sight to behold!

The Reading List



[The Renaissance of Smart Energy](#) by Dr Selin Calik is simultaneously a fascinating – and frustrating analysis of the parallel pressures of the pandemic and of climate change. Fascinating, because the symbiotic relationship between the devastating, though mostly short-term COVID-19 and the even more existential but longer-term climate crisis is full of interesting insights. Frustrating because this was written in 2021 before the efficacy of vaccines was known, and how the world's energy supplies and economies were totally dislocated due to the invasion of Ukraine. Understanding how the prospects for a greener recovery looked at that critical time is valuable, but best of all is her last chapter called *Scenarios for 2050*. For me, her most important conclusion is that the outcome is so heavily dependent upon massive behaviour change. For that, we need a lot of citizen engagement and consultation. [Dr Calik](#) is from Turkey, is based in the UK, and we need to heed her warnings.



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