

June 2023

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

Consultation Catch-up

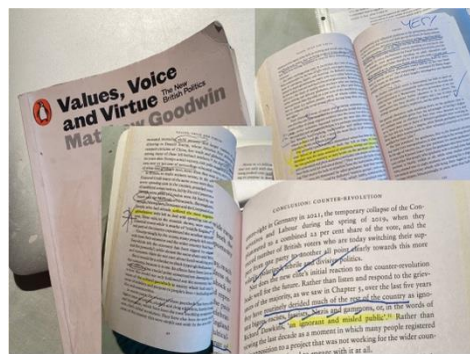
As in previous years, I have just spent several days at the Hay Literary Festival – listening to authors who come to explain and discuss their work.



Events like this enable writers to *engage* with their readers as they applaud, ask questions and queue up for the obligatory book signings. Very occasionally, they *consult* too!

The real value of contemporary non-fiction (and some fiction too) is the light it sheds on modern society. Writers provide insights, anticipate emerging problems and place issues on an agenda. Whether it is AI, climate-related migrations or health inequalities – every year at Hay I hear matters which ultimately feature in important public consultations.

Best of the Blogs



[Dear graduate, liberal, 'elite': it's all been our fault! But there are lessons for public engagement](#) (a commentary on Prof Matthew Goodwin's book – *Values, Voice and Virtue*)

It's easy to dismiss Goodwin as a far-right apologist for BREXIT and all who sailed in her, but having read it from cover to cover, I think it tells us much that we should take seriously. His analysis is that the liberal elite has taken over all our institutions and culture – and alienated the silent majority. It

explains populism and the collapse of the Red Wall etc. Many disagree with him. HOWEVER, for those who worry about the quality of dialogue between the ill-defined 'elites' and even more loosely-labelled 'traditionalists', there are thought-provoking issues, which I cover in this blog.



[Inquiry Chair objects to a consultation on her recommendations; is she right?](#)

If you take 7 years, and process 3 million items of evidence, can there ever be a case for a consultation before Ministers enact the recommended legislation? Prof. Alexis Jay does not think so, at least not in the case of her exhaustive Inquiry into Child Sex Abuse. But I am not so

sure. This commentary looks at the specifics and tries to derive some lessons that may be helpful in the future. Maybe Inquiries do not always provide all the answers - and maybe other stakeholders also have the right to be heard?

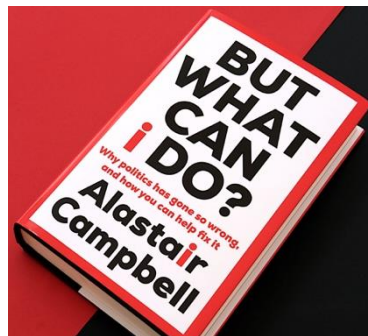
Instant insights

- On 26th May there was an interesting development when the Five London Boroughs challenging Sadiq Khan's extended [Ultra Low Emissions Zone \(ULEZ\)](#) secured the High Court's permission to include further grounds for the Judicial Review scheduled for 4th July. They will now argue that the policy decision followed an '[unfair and unlawful consultation](#)'. **Consultation Guru** has [previously commented](#) on this, but the story seems set to simmer all summer.

Instant insights

- Stand by for a period of intense engagement as the **NHS in England** through its Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) finalise their [Five-Year Plan submissions](#) and seek approval from Health & Wellbeing Boards, many of which are from Councils that have changed political control within the last few weeks. It happens as strikes still continue and the Government has been forced on the defensive and had to produce an emergency programme to improve [access to GP](#) surgeries and fix the 8.00am scramble. I expect even more contention in those areas which were promised one of the [“40 new hospitals by 2030”](#) – many of which now appear to be less ‘new’ and less likely to arrive when expected. These large projects may be welcome but are often accompanied by less popular centralisation or service changes which will require careful handling of public and patient involvement.
- A potential [legal challenge in Manchester](#) may finally answer a fascinating question – whether the Courts might intervene in the selection of users or members to take part in a co-production exercise. With the support of the campaign group [CHARM \(Communities for Holistic Accessible Rights based Mental Health\)](#), a long-term user of community mental health services is challenging the re-design of services. They claim that the NHS Trust failed to involve, or consult properly in the decision-making, and they were not invited to take part in, or made aware of, the co-design process. If this goes to Court – and I’m not sure that it will – it may be the first time Judges will look at the way in which consultors select who gets to participate in co-production exercises. (**STOP PRESS – [Blog published 5 June](#)**)
- About a month ago, the Government published a little-noticed consultation called [Developing local partnerships for onshore wind in England](#). It’s a sign of things to come. Having made a promising start on wind-generation, short-sighted changes to planning laws made by David Cameron’s Coalition Government effectively shut down the entire onshore programme. This exercise feels a little technical and is somewhat timid, but this is really about strengthening ‘community benefits’ to act as a stimulus for local groups to take initiatives. My colleagues at [Community Energy South](#) have assembled impressive expertise to help Councils commit to local schemes, but we need local authorities nationwide to involve local people positively if their net-zero commitments are to be met.

The Reading List



Alastair Campbell spends the first 120 pages on what one reviewer called “eminently convincing doom-mongering”. It’s a forensic analysis of right-wing populism and the weaknesses of current democracy – smothered with heavy dollops of anti-BREXIT venom. The rest of the book, however, is more positive, as a great manual on how to become engaged in politics and make a difference. His goal is to inspire younger generations to plunge into public debate and dialogue. By and large he succeeds.

The chapter headings spell out the key messages. They include *Resist cynicism; Develop a campaigning mindset; Be a strategist; learn confidence; get your message across; How to get into politics.*

There could have been another chapter – *Take part in public consultations.* How about it, Alastair? Next edition?

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