**Notes of a meeting on 29 April 2022 of PEWG with Ruth Harvey [co-convenor of the Scottish Climate Citizens Assembly, and leader of the Iona Community.**

We began with a moment of silent reflection / worship, followed by brief introductions.

Ruth then spoke to us about the Climate Assembly and we continued with a period of questions and discussion

**The Assembly’s remit, participants and process**

·       100 citizens from across Scotland after 20,000 invitations sent out randomly. Those selected broadly represented Scotland’s population (age, gender, disability, household income, geography, ethnicity, rurality, attitudes towards climate change)

·       Tasked to answer the question: ‘how should Scotland **change** to tackle the climate emergency in an **effective** and **fair** way?’ [highlighted as per Ruth’s drawing attention to these key words]

·       Complete Assembly was online, over 8 weekends (November 2020 – March 2021, with weekend 8 as a review weekend in March 2022).

·       Evidence Group gave expert evidence

·       Stewarding Group made up of academics and parliamentarians to oversee the process

·       Conveners – two independent individuals from Scottish public life (RH and Josh Littlejohn) appointed by the Minister, their role being not to contribute expertise or opinion but to **amplify** the voice of the Citizens Assembly and to **advocate** for outcomes

·       Children’s Parliament ran concurrently

·       Context of Covid 19 and COP26

**What were the Assembly’s recommendations?**

The Assembly came up with a series of Goals, each with several recommendations, to the Scottish Parliament.

·       16 Goals – wider vision of how Scotland should change

·       81 Recommendations – specific actions, including a supporting statement setting out the reasoning

***Example of a Goal and its recommendations***

***Goal 3, Retrofitting*:** ‘Retrofit Homes: retrofit the majority of existing homes in Scotland to be net zero by 2030, while establishing Scotland as a leader in retrofit technology, innovation and installation practice.’ Professor Iain Stewart, professor of Geoscience Communication at the University of Plymouth and Director of its Sustainable Earth Institute, led the Evidence group collating the participant’s responses. There were 6 recommendations:

1.       Workforce development and retraining

2.       Implement fuel poverty strategy

3.       Retrofit all existing homes by 2030

4.       Robust retrofit quality standards

5.       Decarbonise heating by 2030

6.       Grants to retrofit homes

**How has the Scottish Government responded and what are the next steps?**

The Climate Change Act required Ministers to respond within 6 months of receiving the report. This grounding in legislation provided a direct route for Assembly members’ recommendations to become policy. The Government published a detailed response, <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-government-response-scotlands-climate-assembly-recommendations-action/> but when this was scrutinized by the Assembly it found that on the whole, this response was taken as a chance for the Government to justify policies that have already been passed, rather than commit to new ways forward rooted in the recommendations.

The Assembly graded the Government’s response on a four-grade ‘traffic light’ system, from dark green representing positive change, through light green and orange to red.

**Example Goal 3**

1, 2 and 6 = ‘actions don’t meet the Assembly’s timing or ambition, but positive change’ (light green)

3, 4 and 5 = ‘actions insufficient to meet the Assembly’s ambition, little or no change.’ (orange)

This is typical of the Assembly’s grading of the Government’s response – generally OK, but not going nearly far enough. Included some responses being branded [red] as ‘recommendation and intention rejected or ignored’, including around the assembly’s recommendations around land use, around taxation, and around frequent flyer (the argument that these are Westminster items didn’t convince the Assembly).

The Assembly has been asked by the Government to continue its work and it has an ongoing role of holding the government to account. Certain members of the Government, notably Patrick Harvie, are keen for this advocacy role to be a strong help in pushing forward climate action. Ruth is maintaining a relationship with the Assembly members.

**Next steps:**

·       Input via the Conveners in a roundtable on spending and resources with Michael Matheson, Minister for Net Zero, Energy and Transport

·       Chance for Assembly to reconvene in a further year to assess impact of recommendations – ‘hold ministers feet to the flames’

**Questions and conversation**

**How did the process of the assembly change / shape people's opinions?**

For some, this was a fairly dramatic experience of awareness raising. After once session, a member of the assembly talked about how she had gone back into her living room (from her zoom room) and there and then signed her whole family up to a new diet and new lifestyle choices.

What was the level of awareness prior to the assembly?

Varied – the selection process made sure that participants included a range of knowledge, and views, from some who worked in the field of climate justice, to climate sceptics, to experts from the world of industry, to academics, students, unemployed people, retired people and skilled workers.

**What has been the reach of the assembly? how can this be grown?**

1.       Assembly members met with Ministers after their report was published to advocate a robust and urgent response.

2.      Extensive media coverage

3.      You can view the [impact of the Assembly here](https://linkprotect.cudasvc.com/url?a=https%3a%2f%2fwww.climateassembly.scot%2fimpact&c=E,1,WvMFUFazy71WEe9moJHMBGQDYfQO8Kk6wKvyE2YCWqT9JMpMbJs6L7tREQz5TtWOHeNlqbLuxwoppel0U6ciucKgcKBSBalt8ugXeSrb_pngaYtY&typo=1)

4.      Civic charter/media coverage/meetings with ministers/engagement with specialists in climate sector/public event/parliament events/news

5.       Report and recommendations published online

6.       Assembly members met with stakeholders, and with organisations that had given evidence to the Assembly during the 6 months that the  govt was deliberating the recommendations

7.       Weekend 8: the whole Assembly reconvened to meet with two Ministers on-line after the Govt’s response was published and again asked for more urgent responses.

**What is holding Scotland / the Scottish Government back from achieving its climate ambitions? What can be done to overcome these obstacles?**

o   Inertia

o   Fear of backlash from industry

o   Blaming Westminster

o   Enormity of climate emergency

o   Other priorities (Covid/poverty/war)

o   Lack of commitment/vision

o   Genuine lack of resource to implement goals

**How can the PEWG raise the profile of some of the assembly's demands?**

* Familiarise ourselves with what the Assembly covered: their session videos can be seen on <https://www.youtube.com/c/ScotlandsClimateAssembly/videos>
* Scrutinise the Scottish government’s actions going forward: hold govt to account for implementation of recommendations via letter writing / lobbying.

[NB we hoped to include in this note, links to the Climate Assembly final report, and to their Climate Assembly’s response to the Government response. But the Climate Assembly website now appears to have been archived and the resources are not accessible. We’re asking Ruth about this. C+R]