

Roundtable 5 – BEHAVIOUR CHANGE

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Chair's introduction:

It is almost impossible to hear any discussion about pathways to a net zero transport system that does not concede to a role for behaviour change alongside technological transformation. However, that is about where any consensus ends. Wildly different meanings, ambitions and approaches to behaviour centre around a fundamental divide in perspectives about where agency lies, how change comes about and how (im)possible it is to achieve. On the one side, shifting how cars are owned and used is regarded as the product of millions of individual decisions and the key is to tailor and target elements of the transport system to guide choices in desirable directions. On the other hand, the scale and speed of change required is deemed to involve a foundational change in our thinking about how we bring about societal-level shifts that go way beyond placing responsibility on one individual at a time.

The discussion in this webinar sat firmly on the latter 'paradigm shifting' side of the divide, whilst casting lifelines across to important perspectives about how individuals can be brought along for the ride. The conversation offers fresh perspectives about the need to champion and promote positive visions of less car dependent lifestyles whilst being careful not to fall into the trap of 'car is bad'. Strong views are expressed about how purposeful behaviour change has historically only come about as a result of strong legislation that creates level playing fields for change whilst the corollary - placing responsibility at the individual level - is counterproductive, leading to backlash and denial. There are additional insights about how success is likely to require a reversal to our thinking about what is discretionary versus non-discretionary travel and that we need to reduce total demand whilst allowing some people to do more, not less.

This is a vital, fresh and frank discussion about how we will continue to fail to change anything other than at the margins unless we fundamentally alter our whole mindset around what it means to design behaviour change interventions. Given the unequivocal evidence that, even post Covid, we need to achieve at least a 20% reduction in car kilometres travelled in less than 10 years in order to prevent the transport sector from irrevocably blowing its carbon, this could not be a more important topic. Every other policy area depends on us transport professionals adopting this radical mindset shift before any meaningful behaviour changes have any hope of being achieved.

The challenge of this discussion was outlined as being to bring forward some different perspectives around the topic of travel behaviour change.

This discussion considered how we can engage with the public to get the kind of change that we need at the rapid pace that is required. The 25% traffic reduction needed over the next decade

in order to deliver on the UK's net zero reduction targets will require a massive cultural change, and it is therefore vital that we start engaging in a very different way with the public.

Look beyond single interventions

It was suggested that travel behaviour change is almost a "toxic" phrase. It can provoke frustration and outrage as to why people do not do the right thing, and how we can get them to do the right thing.

And it's often talked about with respect to very narrow ideas about specific types of intervention, the balance between 'carrots' and 'sticks', and is all about trying to encourage use of alternatives to the car, often without even daring to mention reducing car use. This is an issue as the former does not necessarily lead to the latter.

"I think one of the first things we need to do if we can is to stop allowing the language and the approach to behaviour change to be confined by single interventions, and it being single interventions that define success or not.

"We are not going to get to net zero by picking off at the edge, these edge cases of car use here and there. We've got to talk about how to get whole scale shifts in mindsets, in social norms, expectations, meanings, visions and of course lifestyles. This is way beyond the transport sector."

Most of the behaviour change that has happened has not come about as the result of transport interventions. "We've got to face up to things that are really blocking these mindset changes."

Creating a positive vision

It was suggested that we should think about why so little effort is put into nurturing and elevating the less vocal (but often majority) support in favour of certain types of change and intervention.

At the same time, we have to recognise that the debate is often dishonest because we benchmark change against our cosy lifestyles today without being honest about the changes that will happen if we don't succeed.

Without painting a doom and gloom picture, ways must be found to explain how much better it will be if we change how we live.

"We really have to also think about why we don't collect the evidence about the benefits and the positive visions and lifestyles that we are trying to get people to see. We just don't seem to be able to paint those pictures and we need to think about that."

One contributor spoke about growing up in a car dependent household but then living an urban, car-free lifestyle for the past 14 years. "I have managed to live without a car and the benefits of this to me have been insane."

This lifestyle has saved a lot of money, it's reduced their impact on the city but it hasn't inhibited other aspects of their lifestyle. "I've been able to go everywhere I wanted to go."

How can this be sold as a positive vision?

“I feel like being car-free for me is something that we need to switch the conversation to allow people to be more proud of it, to allow people to shout about it more and to allow people to fight for it more.

“I think at the minute the overarching feeling is that people fight for their privileges to drive a car. But I often find that if I don't have those privileges I am less likely to fight hard for something I don't have versus the people who have it, and I'm probably the one who's losing out because I'm not fighting as hard.”

Moving away from individual car ownership can help us to get to net zero, as well as achieving a range of other individual and societal benefits, but who is promoting this lifestyle?

“The car industry is just so good at selling the empty roads, the car solves everything, the car makes you sexy, the car makes you free. It's freedom, that's what people are selling really. But who's actually selling being free from the car? Who's selling car freedom?”

Should there be a 'car-free society' or some kind of movement? At the moment, cycling groups promote cycling, rail promotes rail, buses promote buses – but no-one is selling the broader concept of car-free living.

Could car-free living become a movement that you could gain 'membership' of. “I can picture people with stickers on their cycle helmets on their bikes, on their backpacks ... Can we offer people discounts? Can we give them discounts off the e-scooter network, off the buses? I picture a car-free railcard. Wouldn't that be amazing, you get a car-free railcard?”

Another contributor spoke about the need to empower people and create a greater sense of positivity and pride towards the alternatives to private car use.

“We have a lot of people already who are living car-free lifestyles. Let's think about empowering them and giving those people a voice, but I think also the idea about car-free as a lifestyle. I don't think it needs to be absolute. This is not necessarily about persuading lots of people to suddenly ditch the car entirely.

“It's a mechanism we can use, it's a message we can use to encourage people to think about whether they can take small steps. And I think it's also a way for mobilising communities at a local level.”

'Car-free days' have been very successful in numerous locations around the world, but it was suggested that they have been under-utilised in the UK. They can help to get communities thinking about how we can make change in an empowering way and in a way that works for local people, while creating a positive vision of greener, less polluted communities that are less dominated by the private car.

Missing metrics

It was argued that transport decisions are often made without consideration of the right metrics.

“We can ask all we like about human behaviour but at the moment the metrics that are used for investment in transport are whack.”

For example, they assume that time spent in transit is a disutility. The result of this is that they are disproportionately preoccupied with speed and time saving as a metric, not the quality of the journey.

This is the kind of metric that we might apply to freight, but it's misaligned with what people actually care about when they make a journey.

"I have perfectly serious colleagues in their fifties who go to the business pod parking at Heathrow Terminal 5. When they arrive they are told that unfortunately the car park is full and they have been upgraded for free to the short stay car park. They admit to me that they are actually gutted because the highlight of their day was going to be riding on the little electronic pod from the car park to the airport.

"Now you can't really justify those electric autonomous private pods if you use conventional transport metrics. It's only when you factor in the fact that people with luggage hate getting onto and off buses [and] that we do quite enjoy a little bit of private space from time to time. It's only on those emotional and psychological factors that we can really justify quite a lot of innovative forms of very, very sustainable transport which just aren't all that fast.

On this basis the contributor suggested that High Speed 2 does not need to be as fast as it is designed to be. "I would argue that for all but a tiny number of people, those people who travel between Manchester and London once a week, we are spending £80bn pounds on High Speed 2 to give a very large number of people a mild convenience [in terms of journey time saving]."

Supporters of the High Speed 2 project emphasise that it's about providing additional capacity rather than journey time savings. But the suggestion was made that you could instead "deliver about 30% of the benefits of High Speed 2, maybe 40%, in six months at a cost of £1m" by simply using technology to help fill empty trains.

An app that offers passengers the chance to board the first train available to their destination (even if their ticket is for a later train) would reduce the end-to-end journey time, ease crowding at stations and enable passengers to proceed to the more pleasurable and productive part of their journey, the on-board travel experience. This new flexibility would make rail travel more attractive and therefore encourage behaviour change.

"I find it really, really interesting the extent to which in an engineering culture psychological solutions are treated as if they are cheating. If you are an engineer you can only solve problems through engineering because to do it any other way is basically seen as not playing the game. I think this happens when we get an increasingly siloed business culture."

The role of psychology and pricing is vital in terms of influencing behaviour change. The technology is already available to do road pricing, for example, but the real problem is electoral and psychological. How do we get people to accept it?

Continuing with this theme: "We don't have SI units for human emotions, do we? We have SI units for time and speed and we can derive units for punctuality, but we don't have SI units for anxiety."

An example of this is the map on the Uber app, which shows users the location of the vehicle they have booked to come and collect them. This was described as a "psychological game changer" because it offered a degree of reassurance that was not previously available to taxi users while they waited. "It didn't change the duration of the time but it changed the quality of the time."

Tailor actions to individuals

One respondent cited the book 'Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed' by James C. Scott. It's argument is that the state defines things to optimise legibility and comprehension at the centre, which means it tends to treat people as uniform, fungible and interchangeable units in its plan.

"I don't think anybody in the environmental movement has managed to crack this yet. What we need to do is translate the aggregate changes in behaviour needs into individual behaviours."

An example of how the choice architecture of this could be approached would be to make a list of 10 big things that people can do, 10 medium sized things that people can do, and 10 small things that people can do. Everyone would be asked to pledge to do any three from each list for the next year. At the end of that year if they be offered the opportunity to change their mind and do something else, or build on their pledges.

"I'd make it manageable because what we are currently ... asking everybody to do everything all at once. And, like a deer blinded by the headlights, people respond to bad choice architecture by effectively doing nothing at all."

It was also argued that not everybody needs to change their transport behaviour.

"I would say if you are an elderly person and you live in the countryside and you have a petrol engine car which is quite old, and you use it very infrequently to go to the shops and about twice a year you embark on a long distance journey, I don't think that person is under any obligation to change their behaviour. They are already contributing through their transport, through their movement, very, very little to the problem."

It wouldn't make sense for a person like this to purchase an electric car, because of the resources consumed and the carbon emitted during the manufacture of that vehicle.

"What we need to do is translate the collective aggregate effects we want to see into individual behaviour which is context-sensitive and sensitive to what people are currently doing, and what they could easily be doing, versus things they find impossible to do.

"We are always looking at this problem at the aggregate and we assume that the individual behaviour is just the aggregate divided by 65 million. And that's a very, very crude, ergodic way of looking at the problem. In fact, there are a lot of people who can do a lot more. There are some people who don't need to do any more. And, depending on individual contexts and circumstances, what people can do will vary."

It was also suggested that public transport "tends to be a bit too utilitarian and too egalitarian". It fails to take account of the different priorities of the individuals who make up different sections of society.

For example, wealthy New Yorkers who would never think about travelling on a bus happily use a jitney (a luxury coach with two-plus-one seating and an on-board host), to get to Long Island. "I wonder if trams are a bit too socialist. The reason I said it is because you'll all hate it, but the rest of the economy works that way."

Another argued that "one-size-fits-all messaging is really difficult", citing the Scottish Government's target to reduce car kilometres by 20% by 2030 as an example. "We don't mean 20% for everyone ... We actually mean an awful lot more for some parts of the population and possibly nothing at all for other parts of the population. Or indeed allowing for some growth in mobility in some parts of the population."

Video-conferencing should be part of the plan

The rapid adoption of video conferencing and home working during the coronavirus pandemic was cited as an example that not all pro-environmental behaviour change needs to involve sacrifice.

“A huge amount of travel, particularly business travel, is effectively performative. You have to do it to show willing, to show commitment. In 2017, if I had a two-hour meeting with a client in Frankfurt, not to fly to Frankfurt for the day, even though it might have been preferable to both of us, would have seemed rude.

“One of the most important things we have done here is that we have created a world where performative travel, travel as a form of costly signalling, as proof of commitment, has been slightly reduced.”

Why wasn't Department for Transport encouraging video conferencing as an effective way of reducing the need for travel before the pandemic gave us all a crash-course in the technology?

What would the impact on travel have been if the Government had gone to Zoom and purchased nationwide membership for the United Kingdom? How would that have changed travel behaviour? How would that investment compare in value terms, and carbon terms, with spending on transport infrastructure?

However, another contributor suggested that the media might have leapt on the government if it had pursued such a policy, and the retail outlets that depend on hordes of office workers would have lobbied against it.

The car is not a 'bad' thing, and choice is not always available

One contributor said: “The really bad thing about the car is not the car itself, it's the fact that that once you own a car you become preternaturally reluctant to use any other form of transport. It's a behavioural problem it's not actually a problem with the device itself.

“It's the effect that owning a car has on your subsequent behaviour that needs to be addressed, not the fact that the car is evil in and of itself. A lot of economic activity could not actually take place on affordable land if people weren't able to drive there.”

Another argued that discussion about behaviour change too often centred on cars being 'good' or 'bad': “This polarisation is actually killing the debate.”

How do you encourage people to change their behaviour when they don't have other choices available to them?

One contributor argued: “We shouldn't place too much emphasis on choice. We need to acknowledge the transport mode the majority of time is not subject to a free, conscious, unfettered choice. And actually by putting too much emphasis on individuals making different choices, better choices, it can be counterproductive, it can be disempowering, it can suggest that we don't really get the practicalities of the everyday.”

Another said that public engagement research had found that the discourse around net zero puts a lot of emphasis on individuals, and this can be counter productive.

“Although in this conversation we have accepted that there are infrastructural limitations, I think there's still a tendency to talk about this as an issue of habit or an issue of behaviours.

“That filters down and you can quite easily see how that can filter into a sort of anti-net zero narrative. People are already trying to push that at the moment, unsuccessfully. You could see how the constant sense that people get that it is being placed on the individual could potentially backfire.”

Another pointed out that access to a car expands choice and it's difficult to pull back from that: “I think we do need to recognise why the car is so popular. [It's] because it gives people access to people and places, opportunities and choices, they wouldn't otherwise have.

“We become habituated to quite high levels of access and choice which will be quite hard to claw back from ... You can manage without a car in a city centre where the population density is high enough to justify a wide range of goods and services within a short distances, so you can walk or cycle or use public transport. But once you get out the under dense city centres into the suburbs beyond the car it seems to me will always remain attractive.”

Meanwhile, another contributor pointed out that leisure travel, which came back strongly as Covid restrictions were lifted, is often talked about as ‘discretionary’. However, it should be understood that leisure travel is incredibly important to people and includes a wide array of things, such as caring responsibilities as well as weddings and meeting friends.

“These are the things that actually people perhaps value in society and we have been calling it discretionary and maybe imagining that that's where the savings are going to come from.

“So I think we need to think about mode shift for these kinds of journeys. We've got to start being more targeted about how we are going to try and deliver this behaviour change.”

Trip generators should get involved

One contributor said: “I wonder whether you think there is an opportunity for those that generate travel ... to influence those choices by people.”

The Transport Decarbonisation Plan published by the Government in the summer of 2021 announced 'Commute Zero' - a package of measures designed to help businesses reduce emissions from their employees' travel. This might see employers encourage car sharing or install showers for cyclists.

Could this kind of initiative help nudge people in the direction of changing how they travel for particular journeys?

Herding and heuristics

The discussion included a contribution about different communications and advertising campaigns which could broadly be simplified into to ‘H’s – herding and heuristics.

Herding reassures those reached by the campaign with the message “don't worry everyone else is doing it”. For example, a campaign to combat HIV trumpeted how many people were getting HIV tests every year in London to get the message across that this behaviour was normal.

“Human beings do what other human beings do, and we kept coming back to convincing them that they were doing the same that everybody else is doing.”

A decade-long campaign for Quorn meanwhile focused on heuristics, ie. lazy, quick mental associations. The first was that vegetarianism meant that you would be low on energy, so long distance runner Mo Farah became the figurehead of the campaign to help dispel this myth.

"What we did is we went right after that heuristic, 'if I am veggie I will collapse with fatigue and hunger'. You had to go right at the problem."

The second heuristic was the idea that children would not eat Quorn, so the advertisements switched to having "bundles of kids eating either their faux chicken nuggets or the little cocktail sausage".

The most recent set of advertisements for Quorn went after the heuristic that you couldn't possibly build a decent body with a vegetarian diet. "We had a huge bodybuilder grunting away with giant weights."

Reflecting on experience with communications campaigns: "We nearly always listed out the heuristics. What are the lazy assumptions and habits and mental associations? ... We went after them. We really attacked them and called them out for what they were, because behind a lot of those lazy associations there's a degree of nonsense you can unpick. You can't work out if you don't eat meat is a nonsense."

Another contributor said: "I think we could have another workshop to identify these heuristics across the board."

Meanwhile, in terms of herding, people may be unaware how normal being car-free actually is. "If you simply to a lay person, 'did you know that a quarter of households live without a car?', people are flabbergasted."

Commenting on herding, another contributor pointed out that veganism has a high profile despite there being only 600,000 vegans in the UK. In contrast there are 31.3 million car-free people already in the UK (although that includes children and people may be unable to drive or afford a car). "There's a lot of people out there that we should be representing and we should be drumming up support for."

Examples of significant behaviour change

Covid lockdowns, the ban on smoking in public places, drink driving and same-sex marriage were all cited as examples of fundamental shifts in public behaviour.

The introduction of the congestion charge in central London in February 2003 was cited as a precedent for changing travel behaviour. It reduced traffic by 13 to 15% overnight, and was accompanied by a scaling up of bus service provision in the capital.

They all involved legislation in the first instance before attitudes changed – and it was suggested that the same approach may have to be taken to change transport behaviour.

"I am wondering if we can even get close to the carbon reduction targets without direct legislation to change attitudes in the first place."

This sentiment was echoed by another contributor: "I don't think that's a good thing to do but we are not going to achieve the targets without constraint and I struggle to see a better way of doing that than pricing, fundamentally. You price it and you price road travel. And you've finally got a cause now that the Treasury is losing £28bn a year currently [because the roll-out of electric vehicles is eroding fuel duty revenues]."

“Is there any example out there of massive behaviour change that hasn't revolved around constraint and getting people to not do things? I struggle to think of one.”

Another view was that we always approach discussions about behaviour change by saying how difficult it is.

“Actually it's really easy. We know exactly what to do to change behaviour. Behaviour change policy is regulation policy and pricing policy largely ... I know there is an oversimplification but essentially we know what to do, we just don't know how to get it done.”

Another contributor agreed that pricing was the key, arguing that comparisons with the smoking ban and other behavioural changes were limited.

“The system we are trying to move away from is infrastructure built around a particular energy environment, built around accessible, cheap fossil fuels for a long period of time. So I don't think ... behaviour change examples like smoking can really illuminate an awful lot.

“There was actually a good paper written looking at how long do energy transitions take. You are looking at centuries. If you want to do it quicker, moving to a different fuel you can get it to decades. But it's normally through some kind of energy price shock, normally an external thing.”

Despite the huge scale of meeting the Government's carbon reduction targets, talking about radical interventions like rationing, as happened during the Suez Crisis, risks provoking a backlash.

“It's no use just saying that because if a politician comes on stage and says ‘we have to be serious, this is what we doing’, you end up with the ‘gilets jaunes’. I agree ... that we need to be serious about these targets, but just saying we need to be serious about these targets over and over again isn't going to get you where we need to be.

“I think if you tell people ‘net zero is going to look like first lockdown did’ you are going to be further away from where you need to get to than where you started. This is not just a one-off blip like the Suez Crisis. It's something that is structurally about what our society is going to look like.”

What did the pandemic teach us?

The pandemic has seen a radical behaviour change in relation to transport. During lockdowns the number of trips plummeted as the population followed instructions to stay at home. And, as restrictions have eased, it's clear that many of them are continuing to spend more time at home and in their local neighbourhoods. The pandemic demonstrated that it's possible for many of us to work and shop at home.

Research into how Covid has changed travel behaviour found that the wealthiest and the most hyper-mobile are the ones that have been most able to reduce their commute and business travel. These are the journeys that were reified before and we had to plan our transport network to enable them. These are the high value trips in the economy, but they are also the most flexible. But the Government was accused of failing to capitalise on the opportunity provided by this.

“The absence of any great national policy response to jump on this and say ‘this is a key part of our travel reduction’ is deeply problematic.”

It's not just business and commuting that people did differently. People shopped less often, but they didn't buy less stuff. People were shopping far less often for things like food.

“There are things we can do without any great pain which are about organising differently.”

The increase in home working has resulted in more walking and a very small reduction in car ownership as people don't need so many vehicles, and could therefore be seen as a route to delivering a positive behaviour change.

“But where are the incentives? It's an absolutely awful set of incentives for home working other than the saving you make on the commute. And yet we still continue to have tax breaks on company car ownership and so on in ways that we don't provide for home working.”

The Government was also accused of failing to capitalise on the opportunity that Covid provided to promote active travel.

“We haven't been able to tool-up very quickly to take advantage of the massive increase in cycling, and I think a lot of that was down to the massive reduction in traffic levels that was there at the time. But we haven't been able to provide vast amounts of cycle lanes. We don't have the engineering capacity. We don't have a consultative capacity to deliver that rapidly. We've got to keep going but it will take a decade or so.”

Leadership is lacking

Contributors argued that the Government was guilty of sending mixed messages to the public. On the one hand it wants to encourage greater use of active travel and public transport, but on the other it doesn't want to do anything that could be perceived as anti-car. For example, the Chancellor responded to rising fuel prices by cutting fuel duty by 5% in the Spring Statement while New Zealand decided to make public transport cheaper for its citizens. “It tells you everything about what the signals are from government.”

Promoting public transport

It was argued that if we are going to get people to go car-free then we need legislation to deliver a radical reorganisation of public transport.

“We need an integrated system like they enjoy in Switzerland, where all transport operators co-operate to give an integrated, comprehensive system which is the realistic alternative to the car.”

“In Britain, outside London ... public transport is fragmented, largely because of bus deregulation, and that fragmentation we must get rid of and that requires legislation.”

Another contributor pointed out that the Swiss have the highest per capita carbon emissions in Europe, including from transport. And so do the Dutch, despite their comprehensive and integrated public transport system.

The reason is that “they do everything more”. They may cycle and use public transport, but they also own large cars and they drive them long distances.

“We can provide people with lots and lots of choice for their local journeys, which these countries do, but it is the longest distance journeys and it is the cumulative journeys by the wealthier of the population in any country that we really are talking about to address the challenge that net zero provides to us.”

Another contributor argued that buses are the only mode of transport that can be scaled up quickly enough to make a difference to carbon reduction by 2030, but the regulatory structure is not the thing that is holding this back.

“It isn't about changing ownership it's about getting a great deal more money spent on it. The bus industry can respond in the timescale but it requires an enormous increase in the amount of money being spent on it. Changing ownership of the companies may or may not help but it isn't the basic problem. The basic problem is lack of resource going into buses.

Another responded: “It needs that massive investment, but we can't just invest in the alternatives. We have to at the same time as providing those alternatives take more space and so on away from the car.

“That's the other example of Switzerland and the Netherlands. They've done great things to provide alternatives but they've done nothing actually to restrict the car or increase the cost of motoring at the same time.”

One contributor asked whether the Government could support one or two demonstration areas where the bus offer could be dramatically improved to provide a viable alternative to cars. “What sort of networks could be put on at short notice to actually show that there are cheaper ways of getting around as part of a transition to not relying so much on cars?”

Another pointed out that some places, like Luxembourg, have made public transport free in order to incentivise behaviour change.

But another contributor countered: “I am certainly not in favour of that. It requires too much public money and will damage capital investment. What we do desperately need in this country outside London is much better public transport and fares systems, which are much, much simpler, controlled by regional authorities, and much cheaper than what we are paying outside London.”

Forums for discussing behaviour change

Climate assemblies, citizens assemblies and juries have been formed to debate issues of concern. They are meant to be representative of the broader public, and provide people with a chance to learn about an issue and form opinions, culminating in some kind of formal output.

Climate Assembly UK brought together over 100 people from all walks of life and of all shades of opinion to discuss how the UK should meet its 2050 net zero target. Meanwhile, many local authorities have run them alongside their local climate emergency declarations.

Experience has shown that while most people would like less traffic and air pollution in their neighbourhoods, they're quite hesitant about giving up cars - and they are quite hesitant about telling people they should give up cars. They tend to instead favour things that make the alternatives more feasible.

Importantly these forums can provide politicians with a mandate for action. It gives them a reassuring barometer of public opinion that goes beyond those who make the most noise. A citizens jury in Kendal, for example, supported the introduction of a 20mph limit in the town. The town council doesn't have the powers to implement this, but it has given councillors a mandate to take to the county council and there are now signs that it will happen.

“Providing that mandate is one of the ways they can help politicians make some of these difficult decisions that might go against the grain.”

At the same time it offers a mandate to individual members of the public, “a people like me effect”.

“If people can see that there has been this level of consultation, people have been listened to and brought into the decision-making, they are more likely to reassess their own views or go along with the findings.”

The Citizens Assembly in Ireland on abortion was cited as an example of this. Research shows that people did shift their views as a result of following the process externally and abortion was legalised in the referendum that followed.

In some cases it might be appropriate for these forums to continue to come together and follow through the various stages of a policy process. In Copeland, for example, a Citizen’s Panel was formed to discuss the controversial issue of a new coal mine. They are now looking at setting up some sort of standing citizens panel to oversee the work of the council and provide local scrutiny.

ENDS