

Involving communities in deliberation:

A study of 3 citizens' juries
on onshore wind farms in Scotland



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**In the last 3 months,
have you participated in a public forum to
discuss policy or community issues?**



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Stay standing if at that forum there was a reasonable...

- ...gender balance
- ...mix of personal and professional backgrounds
- ...range of perspectives and opinions
- ...age range (i.e. 3 generations)
- ...sense that most participants felt included and influential
- ...sense that most participants enjoyed it

mini-publics?

- A 'mini-public' is a **deliberative forum** where citizens are **selected randomly** to reflect the diversity of the public affected by the issue, and convened for a period of time sufficient for participants **to form considered opinions and judgements** (MacKenzie and Warren 2012:95)
- Many types, varying from 12 to 500 citizens
 - e.g. citizens' juries, consensus conferences, planning cells, citizen assemblies, etc

Outline

- The Project
- The Citizens' Juries
- Findings – a taster
- Conclusions: Using mini-publics in decision-making?



The Project (2013-2015)

Two overall **research aims:**

- Understand how deliberative processes can be used to engage citizens on complex public issues.
- Learn about citizens' views on wind farms before and after the process (i.e. having had the opportunity to learn and deliberate on the topic).

6 Stewarding Board members, 7 organisers, 10 researchers, 7 witnesses, and dozens of supporters, colleagues, advisors, partners...

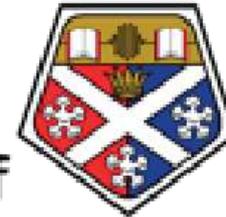


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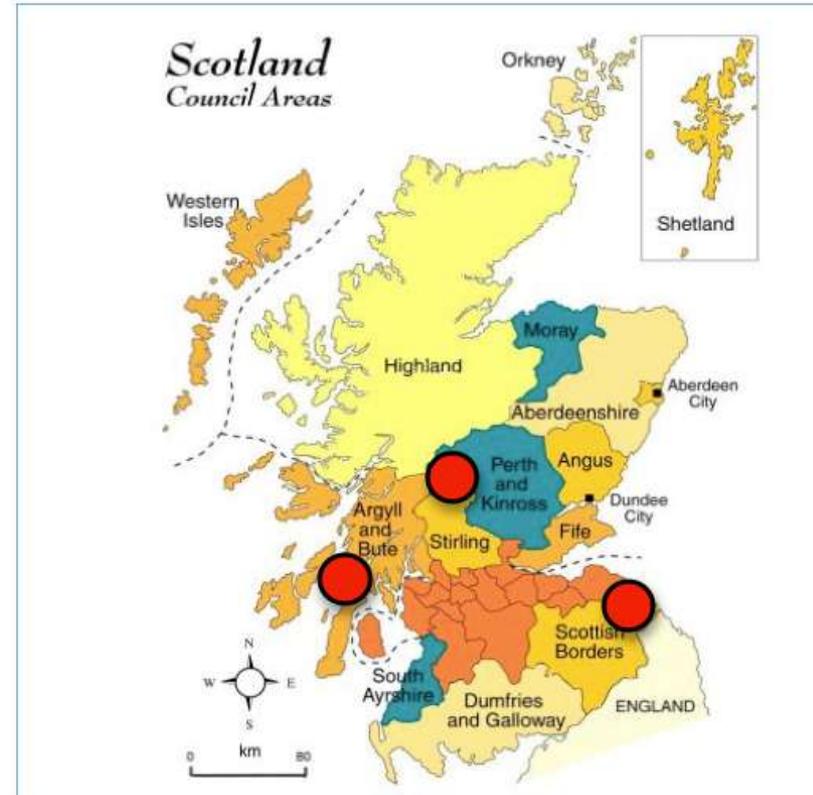
What makes the project unique?

- First time 3 citizens' juries
 - on the same issue
 - in different locations
- Mixed methods research design
 - 5 data sources



The Citizens' Juries

- 47 jurors in 3 locations:
Coldstream (15),
Helensburgh (14), Aberfeldy (18)
- Overall, diverse in demographics and attitudes
- Each jury less diverse > sample and recruitment challenge
- Barriers to participation lowered via: timing, location, stipend...



The Jury's Task

There are strong views on wind farms in Scotland, with some people being strongly opposed, others being strongly in favour and a range of opinions in between.

What should be the key principles for deciding about wind farm development, and why?



Day 1

**Information
Phase:**

Introduction to the process and witness sessions.

2 - 3 weeks

Reflection Phase:

Jurors take away information pack and receive witness responses to outstanding questions from Day 1.

Day 2

**Deliberation
Phase:**

Jurors set the agenda and work together on the task.

Taster of Findings

1. Understand how deliberative processes can be used to engage citizens on complex public issues.



- Participants felt that the citizens' jury model provides an **ideal space for informed and inclusive deliberation on complex policy issues**, and should be used for decision-making.
- Participants not only learned, but **enjoyed learning**. They not only expressed views, but also **developed views**.
- The process **fostered civic skills and attitudes** > 'schools of democracy' where participants develop civic capacity

- Key **organisational challenges**:
 - witnesses, recruitment, monitoring the quality of evidence, assembling Stewarding Board, and strategic choices on the juries' location, scope and task.
- Key factors influenced the **quality of participation and deliberation**:
 - **facilitation** (the craft of supporting groups to have meaningful, inclusive conversations),
 - and **diversity** (the variety of views, perspectives, experiences and backgrounds present in the group).

2. Learn about citizens' views on wind farms before and after the process (i.e. having had the opportunity to learn and deliberate on the topic).



- Participants **open to review and change their opinions**, and in this process the majority of jurors developed nuanced views about wind farm development.
- Three **factors** were influential:
 - **Evidence** –jurors revised their views in light of the information and opinions presented by the witnesses.
 - **Group diversity** – juries featuring a range of perspectives moderated their views (i.e. from very positive to slightly positive); in contrast, a less diverse jury shifted strongly in the direction of its pre-deliberation views (i.e. opposing wind farms).
 - **Local context** – i.e. proximity to wind farms or other energy sources; history of local projects and community engagement.

Participants...

- deepened their understanding of the topic, learning about the **complexity and tradeoffs** involved in making decisions about wind farm development.
- **striking similarities** of ‘principles’ across all juries > 6 prominent **themes**:
 - Energy mix; trusted evidence; negative and positive impacts; limits; public responsibility; ‘who should benefit’
- developed strong views about the importance of **community participation** should be central in decision-making.

The goal of public deliberation is ...

“to improve the legitimacy of democracy by making democratic institutions systematically responsive to reasons, not just the weight of numbers or the power of interests” (Parkinson 2012:170)



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Concluding- How could mini-publics be used in decision-making?

- a **direct advisory body** to decision makers – offering recommendations based on deliberation that draws on diverse views, knowledge and experiences;
- a **catalyst** for broader public engagement – jurors as facilitators of public forums in their communities, thus bringing into the jury a range of local perspectives;
- an **honest broker** of evidence – distilling the pros, cons and tradeoffs of policy options into balanced information that can be shared with local communities as a resource and stimulus for public deliberation

An invitation to the report...

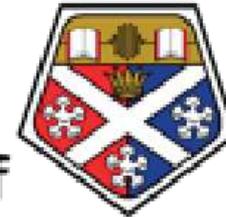


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