

The Purpose and Process of a Constitutional Convention

Combined results of the survey of two different (but overlapping) groups carried out by Assemblies for Democracy (London) in May 2016.

Introductory note

The purpose of this questionnaire was to give democracy campaigners an opportunity to feed in to the discussion around proposals for a constitutional convention and to start a discussion around how a constitutional convention process could be designed so that it had the best public interest outcome.

The questionnaire was sent to the around 150 people who registered for the [Designing Democracy for the 21st Century](#) public meeting at the House of Commons on 10 May 2016 and to the 40 people on the email list of the Assemblies for Democracy Convention Planning Group (a list generated after people expressed an interest after the *Re-imagining Democracy* public conference in November 2015).

Some 37 people responded within the deadline, at least 18 of which were also at the public meeting.

The survey questions were based on the six key issues that Dr Alan Renwick identified in his 2014 report for the Constitution Society: [After the Referendum: Options for a Constitutional Convention](#). The questions were taken verbatim with the following amendments. After our public meeting Renwick suggested adding “What should be on the agenda” and “How long should the convention last”, as these two questions were important in current debates around the King’s College-led proposal for a convention process. An additional question on whether the convention should also address the issue of economic power was added by a member of Assemblies for Democracy as part of Q1. Q3 was edited for brevity.

This summary is intended as a reader-friendly overview of the response, an attempt to group and quantify the types of responses while maintaining the sense of variation along with any unique points made. It should not be relied on as definitive or even as necessarily entirely accurate and should therefore be used in conjunction with the full, raw survey results as necessary. Results from those who registered for the May 10 meeting can be referred to here <https://www.surveymonkey.com/results/SM-LRBQLZ2R/> and those from the Convention Planning Group here <https://www.surveymonkey.com/results/SM-WPXJVZ2R/>.

This combined summary was compiled by Phil England for the Assemblies for Democracy (London) Convention Planning Group and completed on 30 May 2016.

Results

Q1 What is the purpose of this process? Is a wholly new constitution being devised, is the existing constitution being comprehensively reviewed, or is the review restricted to specific aspects? Should a convention address only the political process or should it also consider economic power too?

A range of answers focussed on **fixing perceived problems with the current system** including:

- To develop a democratic system that reflects the will of the people (that is not driven by big business and media interests)
- Fundamentally realign the political process so that it can produce outcomes that are more in keeping with public opinion
- To create a system which takes money/lobbying out of politics
- To fix our broken democracy so that it is guaranteed to work in the public interest rather than for narrow economic interests
- Examine the distribution of political and economic power and recommend ways for making it more democratic
- To look at ways in which democratic participation can be encouraged and facilitated
- To define responsibilities of government to safeguard the people and how it can be made accountable when it fails
- To extend rights to include freedom from poverty for all
- To ensure democratic (and financial) accountability
- To preserve the UK in a way that honours national and regional identities
- To renew our political process
- Stay open to all options at the moment while we develop this important conversation.

We needed to **write an entirely new constitution** (18)

- A people's constitution that moves power from corporations and the establishment to the people
- A codified set of rights and responsibilities
- A stand-alone document that is accessible to all and readable
- A living document that can develop over time
- A wholly new constitution would be an interesting and useful process
- This would be the eventual aim but a good first step would be developing a new system for selecting representatives
- A wholly new constitution for a social republic
- A new constitution replacing existing property rights with common stewardship and replacing existing employment law with co-operative arrangements (modelled on best practice such as Co-operative, Mondragon and SUMA) is needed if we are to address environmental collapse
- The old one is broken and not fit for purpose
- The present constitutional arrangements serve the purposes of the current establishment.

Several felt a new constitution should be written with reference to existing arrangements (4):

- A new constitution keeping existing beneficial provisions and rights
- Take into account past struggles and achievements reflected in existing documents
- Codify the existing constitution, then have a separate process to review/renew it
- How can we make existing constitution work better (and ensure consistency between constitutional aims, policy and legislation)?

Others felt would be better/more practical to concentrate on **specific aspects**

- An entirely new constitution written in plain English would be ideal but it may be more practical to focus on a set of high-impact areas.

Such as:

System aims

- Ascribe a new public interest aim to the system.

The structure and location of power:

- The overall structure of power
- What decisions are taken at each level
- Devolution
- Separation of powers.

Better representation:

- A more sensible voting system

Giving people more power

- Abolishing any form of unelected authority
- Increasing democratic participation and direct democracy
- Ensuring a vibrant civil society.

Curbing the power of corporations, the banks and the rich:

- An end to all forms of lobbying by corporations and banks
- An end to all forms of tax avoidance by corporations, banks and the rich
- Create an independent body that can constantly scrutinise the workings of HMRC.

Economic power should be included in considerations (18). Points of view included:

- Political process and economic power were inextricably linked
- Political power was influenced by economic power
- Issues such as access to party funding or access to advertising should be addressed
- Perhaps consider how to structure companies to put people and planet before profit
- Economic power base needs addressing as it is the source of political power
- Must address private property and corporate power which are at the heart of the present power structures if it is to have any significance
- (See also: “Curbing the power of corporations, the banks and the rich” above).

Others felt this need not be explicit initially or should be addressed in a separate process (4):

- The economy will become fairer as a result of a more democratic and transparent political system
- It's best to let issues of economic power arise naturally out of the process
- Economic power should be addressed by a separate process
- The process will address economic power by making recommendations for removing the power of corporations, banks and rich individuals over government.

Q2 Who is represented in this process? It should be taken as a given that the people in a democracy are sovereign and their representation is therefore essential. But who are “the people”? Are there particular groups that especially deserve or require representation? And to what extent is there a case for following the non-representative principle that expertise should count?

A number of people explicitly supported **random selection** of individual citizens (9). A couple of people particularly pointed to the jury model as one they liked.

Comments included:

- Needs to be over 1,000 to be statistically significant
- Gender equality
- A socio-economic mix that reflects the nation
- Citizens (or residents?) chosen at random
- Perhaps including certain strata in order to cover a wide range of society as possible
- A large random selection should be the core (assisted by facilitators)
- A “mini public” selected at random from the general population
- Adjustments should be made for things such as gender, age range, region, income and disability status

Other answers:

- “Every UK resident”
- Those without power (through wealth, education or career status)
- The vast majority who at present are powerless, alienated and in general dispossessed
- Civil society groups and professional experts who have given their time to consider issues of democracy should have their views taken into account
- A mixture of voluntary groups, experts and individuals
- Neal Lawson’s argument that unions, churches etc had worked in Scotland sounded very plausible (maybe sortition them?)
- “Everyone” (the general public needs to wake up to where real power lies)
- A representative cross-section of class, gender, people with disabilities, ethnicity and nationality
- If the King’s College proposal proves too narrow then the convention should take the form of a popular movement of independently organised assemblies
- Delegative democracy could be a model worth considering
- The Icelandic model is worth consideration where a “mini public” met to devise aims, values and priorities and then a drafting group – of 25 people who were elected in a national poll – used those results to draft a new constitution over the course of four months. However, it seems unlikely that an independent process would be able to find sufficient funding for a national election
- The problem is how to deal with the influence of well-funded corporate lobbies who will no doubt become involved either overtly or covertly.

Several people commented on the desirability of **involving the wider population**:

- There must be processes whereby the voice of those outside the process can feed in and be heard inside the process

- Process should be widely advertised (through national media, local authorities, CVS networks, trades unions, political parties etc.)
- We should create a national dialogue around the process.

Groups deserving particular representation included:

- The poor
- Religious minorities
- People with disabilities or long-term health problems
- Recent immigrants
- Long-term unemployed
- Elderly
- Dispossessed and marginalised.

Comments included:

- Define “minorities” and make sure that they are represented in sufficient numbers so that they have the confidence to contribute
- Might need women-only, BME, LGBT, unemployed discussion groups to overcome traditional power balances
- Essential that now major sectors of society are excluded
- Attention needs to be given to ethnicity, gender, class, age and regions
- Efforts should be made to overcome barriers to participation.

Some felt that **those not served well by the current system should be disproportionately represented** so as to rebalance the current situation and counter the inertia of the status quo.

- Include more people from the lower rungs of the socio-economic ladder (to use the convention as a starting point for rebalancing the economy)
- People who don’t vote or are unemployed deserve special representation as the current system is not serving them
- Use income less than a stipulated amount or educational qualifications as a proxy for social class to ensure proper representation for the poor.

Experts should not be represented in the deliberating group and/or their role should be an advisory one (14). One person felt experts should be included (1). Other suggestions and comments included:

- Perhaps they can also give training
- Should experts help with facilitation?
- Their input should be by invitation of the deliberating group
- Timely progress can only be made by co-opting expertise
- Experts should be sought in the shape of advice and perhaps “witness” statements but should not be represented

Two people argued that **representation from political parties** is essential if it is to have credibility while a number of people argued against it.

- Politicians have a vested interest and it has not been demonstrated that including them has made implementation of recommendations more likely
- Should not be included unless they are thrown up by the random sample

Several people felt that **civil society institutions** should be represented (3) while several argued against it.

- Assemblies of special interest groups (eg disabled groups, trades unions, political parties, religious bodies, professional associations, etc) should feed into the process
- Civil society groups should not get representation as it is difficult to arrive at general principles about which groups should be represented and who shouldn't be
- Should not be included unless they are thrown up by the random sample.

Q3 What is the basic structure of the body or set of bodies that debates the options and makes recommendations? Options put forward so far include: negotiations among political leaders, indirectly or directly elected assemblies, citizens' assemblies, civil society conventions.

Citizens assemblies should be the basic structure of the convention (11). Some people specified that citizens' assemblies should be randomly selected (5). One specified that citizens' assemblies should be open to all (1). Comments included:

- A series of regional assemblies, which would come together for a larger, national assembly to finalise the discussions
- Randomly selected citizens assemblies weighted by population and region
- Participants should not have vested interests
- At least 100 people needed for the process to be credible (test this with politicians in advance)
- Perhaps a mix of open assemblies in different parts of the country, every weekend so people could attend the nearest (eg 50 weekends in ten regions, bi-monthly in each region, eg Scotland, Northern Ireland, Wales, Northeast England, the Midlands, East Anglia, South East England, South West England and London) and parallel civil society conventions for those who opt to join the process. Then a final convention presenting the views of the different meetings
- Local and regional citizens' assemblies which then take their results to a UK-wide assembly
- Alan Renwick notes that a limiting factor in the "mini public" processes (that have been carried out recently in Canada and Ireland and trialled in the UK) is the fact that these groups meet for perhaps one weekend every six weeks and therefore do not have the capacity to reach many quality decisions in a short space of time. One solution would be to have multiple drafting groups working on different questions / issues. Another solution would be to prioritise issues that are most likely to have an impact on reforming the system in the public interest. Should also consider compensating people for their time off (as in jury service) so that they could deliberate for an extended period during weekdays.

Indirectly or directly **elected assemblies** (1).

- Elected assemblies with voting weighted in inverse proportion to income
- Definitely not just elected assemblies (as this would depend on existing political structures)

- It seems unlikely that an independent process would be able to find sufficient funding for a national election.

Three people preferred **civil society conventions** (3) whereas others argued against including representatives of organised groups (3).

- A federation of civil society conventions in England, North of England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland
- Representatives of organised groups should be on hand to advise but should not be part of the decision-making group
- Civil society is not representative of society as a whole (civil society represents a wide range of interests, many of which are often excluded from political power and debate, but civil society is nowhere near comprehensive in the groups, sectors or citizens it represents)
- A coalition of grass-roots groups concerned to replace the merger that has taken place between capitalist corporate interests and the state institutions. As well as formal citizens' assemblies, conventions etc there should be less formal discussions in schools, colleges, trades unions, Women's Institutes etc with social media/digital democracy channels made available for their questions, ideas, proposals, conclusions etc. Perhaps these many groupings around a multiplicity of interests could delegate members to attend conventions
- Civil society groups and campaigns should not be in the convention, but I would like to see them organizing to address the convention

Comments on **negotiations among political leaders**

- Must be avoided at all costs
- Definitely not just politicians (as this would depend on existing political structures)
- The role of politicians could be to start the process
- Politicians should not be excluded but should not have the final say
- If politicians are part of the deliberating/drafting group then civil society should be also
- Negotiations with political leaders who are lobbied by corporations and banks would be counter-productive
- Politicians can advise the process but should not be part of the decision-making group
- This would not be an appropriate form for this process as there is little appetite for reforming the system in the public interest amongst our political leaders
- Existing parliamentary politicians who are critical of the institutional arrangements can have a role.

Several people thought that **a mixture** of some or all the above could work (8)

- A mix of citizens assemblies and civil society conventions with negotiations with political leaders at the end of the process
- Regional conventions (with representatives from political parties + groups to ensure inclusivity as mentioned above + randomly chosen citizens) which then feed into a national convention.

Ideas for **other approaches**

- Local groups feeding into regional groups which feed into national groups
- A form of direct democracy (working on the wider issues) with an additional chamber of representatives (working on the details)
- A structure based around small groups (no more than say 6) to allow individuals to speak, be heard and thus truly participate), locality is important, which leads us to some sort of improvised civil society convening of self selecting citizens
- A sortition group of 1,300 individuals (a man and woman for each MP constituency) who are paid for their work for 1-2 year periods should be the basis for a new political system
- In the event of cross-party backed, King's College-led process being drawn too narrowly, some other form of process would likely be necessary such as a popular movement of independently organised assemblies
- There should be multiple, rolling conventions located regionally
- The threat of civil disobedience is a potent weapon
- The broadest possible involvement throughout the whole of society is needed.

Other comments:

- How can deliberations be protected from input from the publicity machines of the advocates of the currently unelected, non-representative, undemocratic minority who control or have the support of the mainstream media channels?

Q4 How long should the convention last?

The most popular answer was along the lines of **about a year** (7). Other answers ranged from “a full day” to “indefinitely” (17).

- Two years would be a reasonable to convene a number of times and agree recommendations. Certainly no more than five years
- As long as evidence shows people can cope with – up to 18 months of fortnightly weekends. No less than two weekends in a restricted area.
- One week full time (working people can take holiday) plus 2-3 weekends over three months
- As long as evidence shows people can cope with – up to 18 months of fortnightly weekends. No less than two weekends in a restricted area
- Depends on the number of issues
- For a replacement electoral system 8-10 months. Much longer for a full constitution
- A full day minimum with breaks
- Until the social relations which underpin capitalist society have been superseded
- Maybe a year, meeting every week-end
- The convention should last as long as is necessary to arrive at key recommendations (or a draft constitution) but should deliver its results in sufficient time for inclusion in election manifestos for 2020. Deliberations need to be of a duration that is appropriate to achieving quality recommendations

Another popular answer was **as long as it takes** (5).

- As long as it takes to reach consensus
- It should not be rushed, but neither should it drag on long enough for the impetus and energy of the process to wane
- Until the social relations which underpin capitalist society have been superseded

Three people felt that the **process should be ongoing** (3):

- I like the idea that this is an ongoing process which continues to develop the constitution
- There should be a rolling process (of assemblies and meetings feeding into each other; a combination of face to face events and digital crowd sourcing) involving as many people as possible and that will take time
- Indefinitely.

Other answers:

- Think how long the Putney Debates took

Q5 What should be on the agenda?

The agenda should be decided by the assembly (3)

- Would need some education around what a constitution is and how to draw one up
- Politicians should not be allowed to determine the scope of the convention in advance as this risks addressing questions such as structure of the union and devolution while leaving the political system broken and failing to address the broken contract between the government and the people
- If the people are sovereign then the people should decide the agenda
- The only legitimate way for a peoples' constitution convention to proceed is for the people to decide the aims and agenda. This happened to a certain extent in Iceland. We can learn from what happened there and improve on it
- Determined by the convention itself to some degree in a way that responds to external campaigning and input.

The agenda **should be limited to**:

- Deciding the best process for running a citizens' constitutional convention (3)
- Drafting a written constitution for the UK
- Examining the existing unwritten constitution and recommending any changes needed
- One single narrowly defined task per annual convention
- The agenda should focus on fixing our broken democracy so that our political system is guaranteed to work in the public interest rather than in the interest of narrow economic interests.

The agenda **should include**:

Rebalancing power from corporations to people (11)

- **Lobbying** (define a process to bring about an end to all forms of lobbying of the government by corporations and banks) (3)
- **Direct democracy** / how to make our democracy more participatory (2)
- **Reforming party funding**
- How can civil society be part of the decision-making process; how can adequate representation of all groups be achieved; how do we ensure MPs and the Lords respond to civil society and peoples' needs?
- How to make our democracy less of a dirty game

- How to create a constitution that works for everyone and not those with extreme wealth or corporations
- What is a nation state in a world of multinationals?
- **Direct democracy** / how to make our democracy more participatory (2)
- Ensuring MPs have no conflicts of interests
- Removing corporate appointees from inside government departments
- Setting explicit public interest aims for the system
- How power can be transferred to citizens
- Is there a problem of “money in politics”, and if so, what should be done about it?

Rights (and responsibilities) of citizens (including social, digital, ecological and minority rights) (and duties of government) (9)

- To define the responsibilities of a government in safeguarding the rights of the people, and how a government can be held accountable for failing on its responsibilities.

Electoral reform (different voting systems) (7)

The structure of the union and respective powers (the types of issue that are discussed at each level, decentralisation, federalism) (6)

- How to reflect self-determination/devolution/independence within the UK in the new constitution
- how should power be organised across the UK in view of further devolution to Scotland, e.g., how should we address the 'English question'?

Structure of government and where power lies (6)

- Regional/local devolution of power (both economic and political)
- Local, regional and national government
- The abolition of unelected power
- Defining / setting the parameters of power
- Sovereignty
- Direct and representative bodies
- Recall of representatives and their pay
- Accountability
- Freedom of information.

Economic power (4)

- To define a process to bring about an end to all forms of tax-avoidance by corporations, banks and the rich
- To define how a truly independent body can constantly monitor/scrutinise the working of the tax office (HMRC)
- Replacing existing employment law with co-operative arrangements.

Shared/national **values** (and aspirations) (4)

- Setting explicit public interest aims for the system.

The role of **the media** (2)

House of Lords reform (2)

How to re-energise our democracy

Ownership of land and resources (3)

- Existing property rights should be replaced by common stewardship.

Other:

- The constitution should be capable of development over time (so the framers might wish to stipulate the means by which this is done).

It's best **not be too prescriptive** about the agenda (5):

- Start the conversation broadly to open the process, see who shows up, etc.
- Examine the questions “Is there a problem with democracy reflecting the will of the people?” and “New models for democracy”
- Anything touching the safety and dignity of the people
- A full and comprehensive appraisal of the situation who where what when how and alternatives
- Anything, but there should be some expert guidance on the history of making constitutions, in particular of the recent conventions in Canada, South America, Scotland and Ireland.

Other comments:

- We should attempt to get cross-party backing for a radical remit focusing on fixing our broken democracy so that our political system is guaranteed to work in the public interest rather than in the interest of narrow economic interests.

Q6 Who can influence the constitution-making body's deliberations? In particular, who sets its agenda and with whom does it consult, on what basis, through the course of its work?

Who sets the agenda?

A separate organisational body or group of people (6)

- An independent steering group which acts in a totally transparent way
- A smallish group comprising politicians, academics and other experts and community groups
- A coalition of civil society, activist groups, opposition parties and constitutional experts
- A body made up of individuals who have knowledge and experience of designing and running deliberative exercises
- Drafted and debated by politicians, civil society and experts publicly; with the public given the opportunity to suggest topics (the most popular of which must feature in debates) then 2-4 topics decided on in a national vote
- Single issue action groups and enlightened MPs should draft an agenda for wider discussion
- Steering group should be sufficiently senior and well connected to be credible and highly respected as their involvement will colour the process.

The deliberating body itself (6)

- There needs to be a sophisticated facilitation session to form the agenda
- The agenda should be set in the citizen assembly's first meeting
- In a rolling process, the first assembly could decide which issue the next assembly should deliberate on, and so on
- The body sets its own agenda and this must be flexible
- The aims and agenda should be set by the people themselves as the first step of the process.

An outside body or external actors can make suggestions but the deliberating body makes the ultimate decision (7).

- The assembly should take advice from the steering group but be free to make suggestions of its own and ultimately decide which issue(s) to focus on.

Agenda should be limited to writing a new constitution (2).

Assemblies for Democracy should be advocating and developing agenda ideas.

Who can influence the deliberations?

The deliberating body itself should decide this (5)

- The deliberating group should have the power to call experts (4)
- The deliberating group should be able to consult the people through citizens assemblies and other groups where people have organised themselves
- The selected group should have the total freedom to work without interference, influence or constraints
- The assembly should take advice from the secretariat but make its own decisions about which experts to see.

An external body should guide the deliberations (6)

- The convention should have a secretariat which can help it identify relevant experts to call on in doing its work
- A smallish group comprising politicians, academics and other experts and community groups
- Deliberations should be guided by democracy campaigners and organisations, volunteers, nominated individuals, constitutional experts, politicians and representatives of different groups in society
- A coalition of civil society, activist groups, opposition parties and constitutional experts
- The dispossessed – they have the clearest vision of the oppression under which they live
- A broad secretariat drawn from experts including (non-elite) university staff, democracy campaigners, academics, grassroots facilitators, etc. could suggest which experts appear before the deliberating group
- A committee of two academics and 3 or 4 convention members.

Others answers:

- There should be channels available for anyone who wants to add their voice
- Precautions should be taken to limit the influence of disproportionately powerful groups such as the business lobby

- “You guys, having taken into account the results of this survey”
- Let us look at assemblies in France and Spain and learn from them
- Digitally-based referenda shouldn't be too hard to arrange these days., and can be brought into use through a broad-based educational, promotional publicity campaign associated with the debate
- There should also be a web-based platform where the process can be made transparent and where members of the public can make comments and suggestions for consideration by the drafting group.

With whom does the group consult?

- The group should be free to consult anyone who people agree would be useful
- Legal experts
- Independent and appointed experts
- Experts should be invited based on an objective appraisal of their academic record (eg a certain publication record)
- Organisations made up of the wider public advocating fairness, openness, transparency, good governance, human rights including women's rights, justice and democracy
- People's assemblies can be consulted
- Anyone with a for or against framing of the problem
- All political parties, national and regional government, civil society
- Historians, constitutional lawyers, campaign groups and take written “evidence”

Q7 What are the body's operational procedures? Most importantly, how does it make decisions: by simple majority, qualified majority, consensus, or some other principle?

Simple majority (8)

- Not simple majority as this would see lots of people excluded
- If a large number of people are involved decisions would need to be made by majority vote
- If issues are very contentious vote should be by secret ballot
- Less significant issues should be decided by simple majority
- Ultimately, votes should be taken subject to simple majority rule. But working practices should aim at finding common ground.

Qualified majority (7)

- More substantial issues should be decided by qualified majority
- I think the Electoral Reform Society may have a good voting process for this
- There should be an overall majority and a majority of members from each region
- A 59% qualified majority (to mitigate the 8.1% margin of error for a group of 1,300 people)
- 60%

Consensus (8)

- Ideally decisions would be consensual
- The particular form would need to be discussed and agreed (i.e. unless you have major reasons for opposing something you agree to let something happen even if

you yourself would not do that particular thing: blocks should not be allowed to prevent agreement occurring)

- Best but most difficult to achieve/too ambitious
- Consensus works best if small numbers of people are involved
- If there is a single, final document or constitution every effort should be made to have it accepted by a sweeping majority, if not even a consensus

Strive for consensus but if not then majority voting (13)

- Aiming for maximum consensus, thoroughly discussing dissent, trying again for consensus, breaking issues down taking polls and votes and accepting that the legitimacy of decisions is variable according to the amount of agreement
- The group should strive to make decisions by consensus as in the case of juries
- Consensus if possible or simple majority when not
- If consensus is not achievable, local assemblies should produce majority and minority reports to take to the national Assembly.

Decision-making process should be agreed by the assembly (2)

Other

- Preference voting (a modified Borda count) as this encourages people who disagree to talk and discourages 'gaming'
- Voting weighted by level of deprivation
- Should the group be self-facilitated, facilitated by external facilitators, or should the group receive facilitation training so they can self-facilitate better?
- Examine all the alternatives/

Q8 What happens once the constitution-making body has made its recommendations? Does that body have the capacity to enact its recommendations into law itself? Does it merely recommend to Parliament? Is a referendum held? Do the recommendations automatically go to a referendum or can Parliament decide after the recommendations have been made?

Most people felt that the recommendations should go to a referendum (20)

- A referendum would need support from Parliament
- If the process is thorough it may generate the kind of support which would make it difficult for parliament to deny a referendum
- A referendum would give it authority
- Referendum could include a question to see if people are supportive of the general spirit of the document (which would allow for revision and a second referendum if some object to specific elements)
- I fear that media outlets such as the Daily Mail would sabotage a referendum
- A referendum is not the answer – too many vested interests would influence the outcome.

A subset said the referendum should be binding (4)

- Unless there is a referendum that is binding on Parliament the whole process would be a waste of everyone's time

- If the referendum is in favour then government must pass recommendations/ convention as a Bill/Act
- No other institutions should be able to influence, approve or deny the recommendations of the constitution-making body.

Another subset said the recommendations should automatically go to a referendum (5)

Parliament should decide (4).

- It has to go to Parliament (so the credibility of the process and involvement of relevant parties from the outset are essential) with all party support and put into law that way
- Parliament to decide after a referendum has been taken
- The process of the convention must be such that its recommendations are seen as a part of the natural normal progress of society; as such MPs will be part of the process and change the laws
- Requiring a debate in Parliament on the recommendations looks like the best bet since an independent process could not guarantee a referendum

Parliament would be resistant to change (5).

- If the recommendations are dependent on parliament deciding, they could very easily “kick it into the long grass”
- Parliament has a vested interest in the status quo and is unlikely to support any real change
- In the view of many, Parliament is rigged in favour of the status quo
- Since Parliament has become subject to the needs of powerful corporate interests, it has ceased to offer a channel for democratic decision-making and can hardly be expected to seriously debate its own future

Proposals *should* go to a referendum but that might not be possible/straightforward (2)

- Parliament cannot be expected to organise a referendum which might propose its own dissolution
- The Assembly should ask Parliament to call a referendum on the proposals as a whole. If Parliament declines, then the UK-wide Assembly should stay in session and seek support for a referendum organised by citizens. The Assembly should then consider replacing Parliament as the political hub of the constitution
- In the case of the Jon Trickett proposal, however, where the convention is being launched from Opposition, it is hard to see how the convention could take its proposals to a referendum - it certainly couldn't take them to a binding referendum

Negotiations between the drafting group and politicians would be needed (2)

- Work with politicians to draft a Bill (which parliament has to vote on each year)
- Whatever you can get away with the politicians

Other

- The success of the project depends on how engaged the general public has been and it will depend on the support of the citizenry to actualise the next steps
- We need the various political parties to take up the ideas

- Create a working version of the new democracy alongside the current model (armed with the legitimacy of data and deliberation)
- Recommendations/constitution automatically becomes law
- The body should be given an initial guarantee that whatever it decides will happen, perhaps by being given legislative powers
- An independent process that has been given cross-party backing and is launched imminently would be in a strong position to influence party manifestos ahead of the general election. Ideally a cross-party coalition would be formed that would commit to implementing the recommendations that emerge from the process. On one or more of the coalition parties coming to power in 2020 they should look to implementing the recommendations as a priority in the first six months of the parliament.
- Positive media attention should be sought for the final recommendations
- Civil society can also be asked to support the final recommendations
- Draft constitution should be widely debated in citizens organisations (e.g. trade unions) and throughout the country.

Assemblies for Democracy (London), May 2016.