

Elmbridge Climate Change Citizens' Panel

Surrey Climate Commission Annual
Gathering and AGM

30 April 2026



Elmbridge
Borough Council



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Introduction

Professor Angela Druckman

Director

Surrey Climate Commission



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Introduction: What is a Citizens' Panel?

- A Citizens' Panel brings together a group of randomly selected residents to collectively learn, deliberate and make recommendations.
- A type of deliberative democracy that is ideal for addressing 'wicked problems'.



Council approval

Councillor Ashley Tilling

Portfolio Holder for Climate Change, Environmental
Services and Sustainability

Elmbridge Borough Council



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Council approval

- Elmbridge Borough Council declared a climate change emergency in July 2019 and set carbon neutral organisation by 2030 aim
- To help shape our response to climate change and move to a greener, more sustainable future we:
 - work with and support community groups and businesses doing climate action work
 - surveyed wider residents on their key climate change challenges
- Climate panel was developed and supported by Cabinet to enable us to hear from additional local voices, with differing opinions on climate change topics, and who don't normally engage with us



Advisory group



- Part of best practice; oversight of panel process
- Advisory group:
 - Ensured project design was fair & rigorous
 - Agreed upon and monitored recruitment
 - Set overarching question for the panel:
 - ***What steps can we take locally to address climate change and protect the environment?***
 - Suggested topics to be considered
 - Identified commentators/speakers best able to present on the topics
 - Push for implementation of Panel's recommendations

Panel process

Rowan Harris

Engagement Lead

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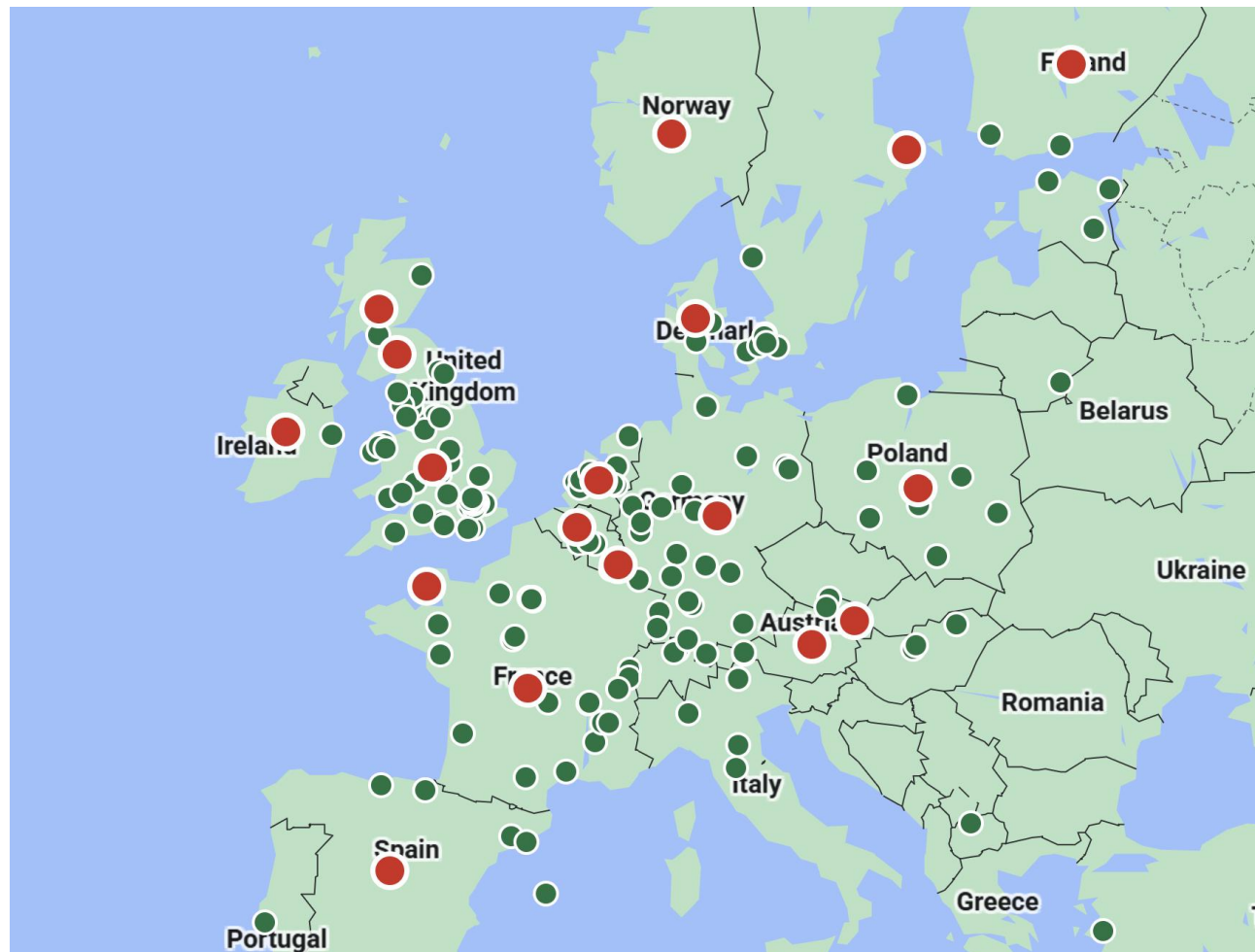


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What does a citizens' panel look like?

A citizens' panel is a **broadly “representative”** group of 20+ members of the public who are chosen by **lottery** to **deliberate** and **make recommendations** on a specific issue or question over multiple days.

What does a citizens' panel look like?



- ~ 60 local and national climate panels / juries / assemblies across the UK
- Many more across Europe!

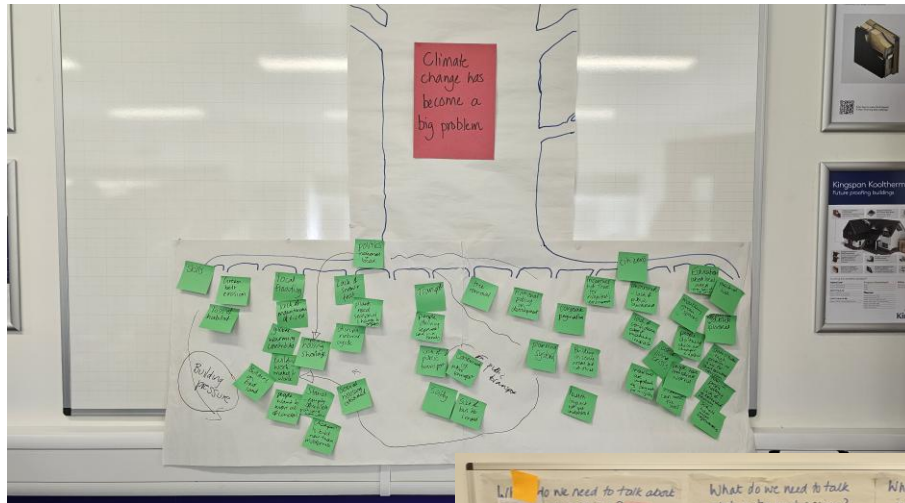
Map of climate panels / juries / assemblies across Europe

How did we select people?

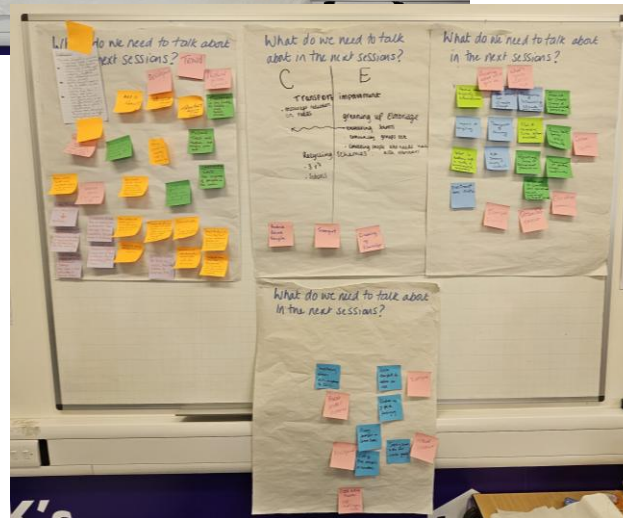
- **Sortition** (two-stage recruitment process involving random stratified sampling)
 - 5,000 Letters
- Sortition Foundation selected to **reflect the diversity of Elmbridge in terms of:**
 - Gender, Age, Ethnicity, Disability, Education, Level of Climate Concern, Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), and Primary Mode of Travel



Panel sessions



*Problem Tree:
"Climate Change
has become a big
problem..."*



*Prioritising "what do we
want to talk about in
the next sessions..."*

- **Session 1:**
 - What is climate change?
 - Overarching question: *What steps can we take locally to address climate change and protect the environment?*
 - **What do we want to talk about next?**

Panel sessions



Mapping what positive actions are being taken to address climate change and protect the environment and any challenges / barriers.

- **Session 2:**
 - **Where are the emissions coming from and travel and transport**
- **Session 3:**
 - **Green spaces and how does change happen?**
- **Session 4:**
 - **Housing**

Panel recommendations process



- **Session 4 and 5:** Recommendation Writing
- What makes a good recommendation?
- Drafting recommendations independently and with support of a facilitator
- Also a **panel statement** that received unanimous support

Panel statement

We, the Elmbridge Climate Change Citizens' Panel, are a cross-section of Elmbridge residents. We were complete strangers who were given the opportunity to work together with people with different views from different parts of Elmbridge.

The experience has been positive, motivating, and uplifting. We have felt included and listened to. We feel that we have been given a voice. At the same time, we have gained a deeper understanding about what we as a community can do to make a positive impact on our environment.

After 30 hours of hearing from experts, sharing our own experiences, and deliberating, we have collectively concluded that climate change is a big problem. It will cause irreversible damage to our planet unless we make significant changes.

Panel statement (continued)

We also recognise that there is no simple solution. We see that many of the current solutions are unaffordable to most people, and that the global nature of these issues can make our actions feel insignificant. At the same time, acting on climate change can bring about cleaner air, mental and physical health benefits, and lower energy bills.

It has been empowering to focus on what we can do locally and think that we can all play a positive role.

The problems run deep but there are steps we can take. This panel is one step in the right direction.

We ask for those with power to take our recommendations and do something about it. This means MPs and councillors, but also landlords, developers, influencers, and so on. Climate and the environment should be at the front of all of our minds.

We must act now before it is too late.

Recommendations & next steps

Jamie Pourier-Benham

Climate Change Programme Lead

Elmbridge Borough Council



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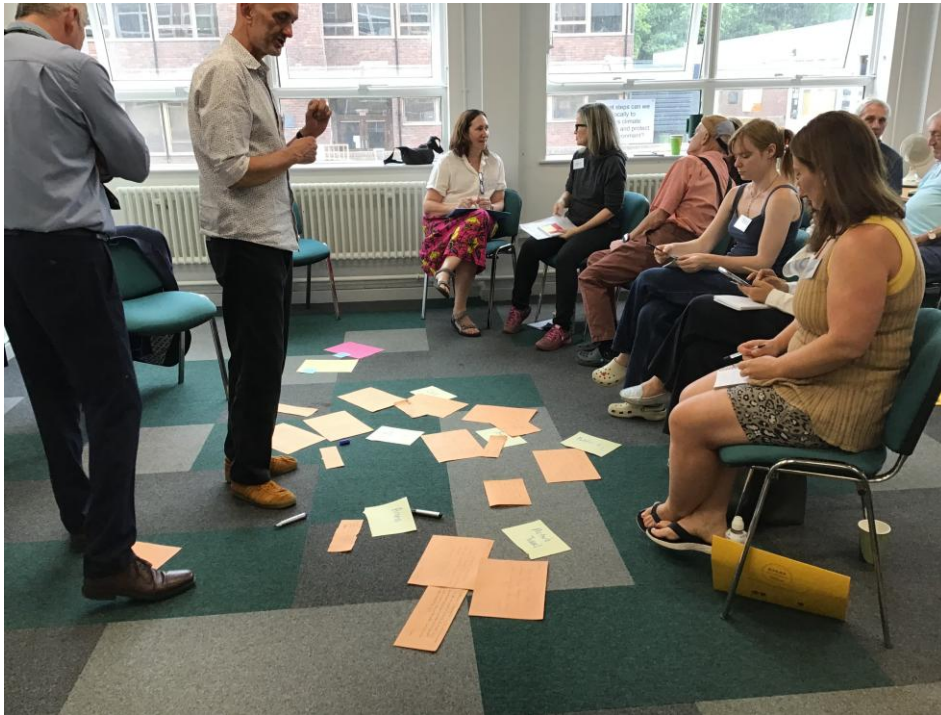
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Panel recommendations

- 18 recommendations (39 deliverables)
- Three broad categories for the actions:
 - council can take now to tackle climate change
 - council can take over the longer term and considered as part of the new Local Plan preparation process
 - outside the council remit to deliver alone - for county council, unitary or Government
- Panel process details and recommendations are on our panel commonplace webpage:
<https://sustainableelbridgejourney.commonplace.is/>



Next steps - delivery programme



- Translating recommendations into action
- Cabinet approved council projects recommendations delivery programme for 2026-27 including: energy-efficiency support roadshow for residents, active travel, scoping new cycle storage sites, and climate-focused internal training
- Liaising with Surrey County Council on deliverables within their remit, and with new unitary following vesting day
- After election, briefing MPs
- Support wider research and knowledge sharing

The Panel

Panel members

Elmbridge Climate Change Citizens' Panelists

Elmbridge Residents



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Panel member reflections

- Joining us today:
 - Fiza
 - Luke
 - Robin
 - Ruth
 - Abekir
 - Ciaran



Thank you

Q&A



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