

FURTHER INFORMATION FOR PROSPECTIVE MEMBERS

This paper sets out to answer Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) that are likely to emerge during the recruitment process, in order to give prospective members of the Citizens' Assembly the information and assurances they need to make an informed decision about whether they want to participate.

Participation

What will the meetings be like?

The meetings will take members through a structured process of learning, discussion, deliberation and decision making. Information will be presented in a variety of formats over the course of the meetings – including, potentially, presentations with by experts, short written papers, videos, panels where members can ask questions and interactive exercises.

Most of the time at meetings members will be working in small facilitated discussion groups. Here members will undertake a variety of exercises to clarify the information presented, explore its implications, test and challenge assumptions and draw informed and considered conclusions.

It is likely that there will also be a variety of different ways that members can contribute their thoughts and opinions, for example, in discussions, through written exercises and through private ballots.

What will the discussions be about?

The discussions will be about a range of matters that are important in taking decisions about Scotland's constitutional future. That will include hearing evidence and learning about the kind of social and economic challenges and opportunities for Scotland, including the impact of Brexit, and to hear evidence and learn about the current constitutional situation i.e. where responsibilities for decision-making about Scotland's future lies. This evidence will be prepared independently of the government and of any political party and there will be safeguards to ensure that it is factually correct and impartial.

There will be opportunities to consider a small number of topics in more detail, which members agree are the top priorities for further discussion. Members will be supported to agree between them what those areas are, and it is important not to prejudge these. Members are likely to be interested in a wide range of topics from the range of social and economic challenges that they will hear about.

Whilst It won't be possible to take evidence on all issues, members will have the opportunity to recommend further areas where discussion should take place e.g. in a further Citizens' Assembly.

What if I don't know anything about government and the constitution in Scotland?

Most people in Scotland do not have particular skills or experience on these matters and the Assembly is about giving some citizens' the opportunity to work together to agree what information people need in taking decisions about the future.

Members of the Citizens' Assembly are not therefore being recruited on the basis of particular skills or experience and there is no expectation that you will have any knowledge on the topics before the meetings. A large part of the first few weekends will be devoted to learning about the issues under consideration.

Do I need to prepare anything in advance?

The organisers may send you a short background briefing paper to read in advance, but there is no expectation for you to undertake a lot of learning before the meetings. Everything you need to know will be covered during the weekends.

What is the dress code?

The dress code for all meetings of the Assembly is casual – we want you to be comfortable and just be yourselves. We do however request that you do not use your clothing to advocate any political views during the meetings of the Assembly. There is no expectation that people change for dinner, however you may want to dress up a bit more for the reception on the first Saturday evening, but it is not a formal event.

Attendance requirements

Do I have to be able to go to all meetings?

Yes. The Citizens' Assembly will involve members in an ongoing learning and deliberative process, so people have to be available for all six meetings.

At what time will the meetings start and finish?

The final programme is still to be confirmed but we expect the sessions to run as follows (and sessions will not start earlier or finish later than advised here).

Weekend 1 - Edinburgh

- Saturday 25th October 2019 12:30pm start (with lunch)
- Saturday 25th October – evening reception
- Sunday 26th October – finish at 2:30pm (including lunch)

All other weekends – Glasgow

- Fridays – check into hotel from 3pm
- Fridays - 6:30pm start for weekend briefings and dinner
- Saturdays – 9am – 5pm (Dinner at 7pm)
- Sundays – 9am – 2:30pm (including lunch)

Hotel and accommodation

What will the accommodation be like?

Both hotels are 4-star hotels. You will have a private, ensuite room.

There are also a number of fully accessible rooms at the hotel that can be allocated to you if required.

What food and drink do you provide?

All meals throughout the Assembly meetings will be provided at the hotel (dinner on the Friday, all meals on the Saturday and breakfast and lunch on the Sunday). Tea, coffee and snacks between meals will also be provided.

Can you cater for dietary and religious requirements?

Different dietary requirements can be catered for as long as we know in advance. Once your place is confirmed staff will be in touch to request information about any dietary requirements you may have.

Is there any food and drink you don't cover?

Alcoholic drinks are not provided (except at the welcoming reception on the 25th October). You can however buy drinks at the hotel bar or order room service at your own expense.

Can I bring my partner / family member(s) / friend with me and can he/she/they eat with me?

You can bring a friend or family member with you if you choose, however you will have to pay a supplement directly to the hotel for additional occupancy and all meals throughout the weekend.

Any guests you bring with you will not be able to join in or observe the meetings and lunch and evening meals are for Assembly members only.

Payment of Expenses and "Thank-you" gifts**What travel expenses do you cover?**

All reasonable travel expenses (which means standard class bus, rail and air fares) will be refunded upon the production of a receipt.

While we would encourage people to use public transport where possible we recognise that this is not an option for some journeys. In this case car mileage will also be covered to and from your home postcode. Parking charges can also be reimbursed if required.

Do I need to organise my own travel?

Ideally you will make your own travel arrangements to get to each meeting and your expenses will be refunded.

Whilst the organisers can't make everyone's travel arrangements for them, if you need help booking or paying for your travel then assistance can be provided once your membership of the Assembly has been confirmed.

When and how will travel expenses be paid?

Travel expenses will be reimbursed into your bank account within 10 days of each Assembly meeting. Once your membership has been confirmed the organisers will provide you with a claim form and explain how the process will work.

What is the "thank you" gift?

All participants will receive a gift of £200 per weekend as a thank you for your participation. This is in addition to your food, drink, accommodation and travel expenses.

How and when will I receive the "thank you" gift?

A “thank you” gift will be paid into your bank account within 10 days of you attending the Assembly meeting. You will only receive the “thank you” gift if you attend for the full weekend.

Once your membership has been confirmed the organisers will provide you with a claim form and explain how payment will work. If you do not have a bank account they will work with you to explore other options for receiving the “thank you” gift, however it will not be paid in cash.

Do I have to declare this as income?

In most cases it will not be necessary to declare this “thank you” gift as income. People are entitled to receive up to £1000 per financial year as unearned income. It will be up to you, and your own personal circumstances, to decide whether this takes you over that limit and needs to be declared.

I’m on benefits. Will this mean that I can’t attend?

If you are on benefits, it is your decision about whether or not to accept the “thank you” gift as it may affect your benefits. How it may affect your benefits will be differently depending on the type of benefit you receive and your own personal circumstances, so this is something you would need to check for yourself.

Privacy and media coverage

Will my name or address be published?

In agreeing to be a member of the Assembly, you must agree to your first name and surname, and possibly the region where you live, being published on the Assembly website. This is necessary to ensure transparency of the Citizens’ Assembly. There is no intention to publish any other personal information.

Prospective members will be given a Privacy Notice which outlines how their personal information will be used as part of the recruitment process.

Will photos be taken? What will the photos be used for?

Photos will be taken to document the Citizens’ Assembly of Scotland. Some of the photos will be used for reporting and promotion, including on the website and on social media. You will have the choice about whether you appear in photographs and will be asked to give your permission for how any photos of you are used.

Will the meetings be televised?

Some parts of the Assembly meetings will be live-streamed, including presentations, question and answer panels, feedback from table discussions. The discussions between members in their table working groups will not be broadcast.

Will I be expected to talk to the media?

Members of the Citizens’ Assembly are not required to be publicly facing or speak to the media.

It is the Conveners role to speak to the media on behalf of the Citizens Assembly, however there may be opportunities for individual members of the Assembly to be interviewed about their experience of taking part if they choose.

Will the public and/or the media be able to observe the meetings?

There are still some decisions to be made about whether members of the public or the media will be invited to observe some (or all) of the meetings. Previous Citizens Assemblies have established strict observer and reporting policies which were designed to balance the need to enable free and frank discussion between members, protect the privacy of participants and also the legitimate interests of the public in the work they are undertaking. This has meant that while observers were able to be in the room they were not able to listen to individual table discussions or identify individuals.

Will people / the public know what I've said?

Although the discussions at the assembly may be recorded for research and/or transcription purposes none of the reports produced by the Assembly will attribute comments to an individual member.

Will I be able to share on social media that I am part of the Citizens Assembly?

Yes. There will be a social media policy developed that members will be asked to sign up to that will be designed to protect the privacy of other members and the smooth running of the meetings.

Additional Support

How accessible will the Citizens' Assembly be?

All reasonable accommodations will be made to support the participation of a diverse array of Assembly members. This could include, where needed, providing materials in Braille or large print, sign language interpretation or covering the costs of a carer or personal assistant to attend to support a member.

How accessible is the venue?

The venues being used for the meetings and the hotel dining rooms are step free and wheelchair accessible.

Fully accessible hotel rooms (including fully accessible bathrooms) are also available. Once your membership of the Citizens Assembly is confirmed staff will be in touch with you to discuss any access requirements you have and how these can be supported.

Is childcare available on the site?

There is no childcare available at the site. If you need support with childcare to enable you to attend the organisers will contact you once your place is confirmed to make suitable arrangements. This could include, for example, paying childcare costs during the Assembly meetings, providing a 'pop-up' creche or covering the costs of a friend or family member to attend with you to look after the child(ren).

Can a carer attend with me?

If you require a carer to attend with you the costs of their travel, accommodation and meals will be covered in full. If needed they will be able to join the meeting to support your participation but cannot contribute to the discussions themselves.

I provide care for a friend or family member. What support can you offer?

The support we can offer will depend on your circumstance and the needs of the person you care for. One option may be to pay for respite care to enable you to attend. Another option may be that the person you care for attends with you, although they would not be able to be with you during the meeting times.

I have learning difficulties, can you accommodate this?

The Citizens' Assembly will involve learning quite a bit of new information each weekend (both written and from presentations), discussing this with the other members and drawing conclusions / making choices about your preferences. If this is something you think you will manage the organisers will discuss what additional support will be needed to help you participate in the meetings most comfortably and effectively.

I am under 18. Are any additional supports being put in place?

Any Assembly member under the age of 18 has the option of bringing a parent/guardian with them to the Assembly meetings as a chaperone. The travel, accommodation and meals for the parent/guardian will be covered in full. In addition, anyone under 18 will be given a dedicated contact point within the Secretariat who will be present during the meetings and able to offer additional support if required.

Is there somewhere I can pray?

Yes, we should have broken for lunch and dinner during midday and evening prayers. But even if that's not the case you can leave the event for a short time. You will be able to use the privacy of your room for prayers.