

Strengthening Citizen Participation in Climate and Green Economy Governance in South Africa

A Guide for the Legislative Sector

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Table of Contents

Foreword	5
Acknowledgements	6
Disclaimer	6
Authors	7
Executive Summary	8
Key findings	9
Recommendations at a glance	10
Cross-cutting institutional infrastructure	11
Implementation pathway	12
How to Use This Guide	13
Abbreviations and Acronyms	14
Section 1: Introduction	18
1.1 Purpose, scope, and audience	18
1.2 Methodology	19
Documentary analysis.....	20
Practitioner consultations and event participation.....	20
The climate oversight audit.....	21
Evaluative framework.....	22
Section 2: The case for deliberation in climate governance.....	23
2.1 The case for deliberative citizen participation in climate governance.....	23
Parliaments as deliberative institutions.....	26
2.2 Deliberative democracy: international responses	27
2.2.1 OECD Guidelines for Citizen Participation Processes (2022)	27
2.2.2 OECD Catching the Deliberative Wave (2020)	28
2.2.3 OECD Eight Ways to Institutionalise Deliberative Democracy (2023)	29
2.2.4 International IDEA, Deliberative Democracy and Climate Change (2024).....	30
2.2.5 IPEN Guides on Citizen Engagement for Parliaments (2025).....	31
2.2.6 WFD Introduction to Deliberative Democracy for Members of Parliament (2021)	31
2.3 Case studies in UK and Europe	32
Climate citizens' assemblies	32
Cross-portfolio coordination mechanisms	36
Committee-connected panels	38
2.4 Case studies in Africa and Latin America	39
Mali Espace Citoyen d'Interpellation Démocratique (2006)	40
The Gambia North Bank Region Citizens' Assembly (2025)	42
Maldives climate assemblies (2023)	44
Pará state, Brazil (2024–2025).....	45
(Re)surgentes intercity climate assemblies (2024)	45
Ghana's deliberative polls (2015 onwards)	46
Malawi Salima District Citizens' Juries (2020)	46

Cape Town Climate Citizens' Assembly (planned, 2026)	47
2.5 Cross-cutting findings from the international evidence	47
What links deliberative processes to policy outcomes?	47
What makes deliberative processes survive and endure?.....	48
What makes deliberative processes inclusive and legitimate?	49
Section 3: Climate governance and deliberation in South Africa	50
3.1 Introduction	50
3.2 International climate governance	50
3.2.1 Binding international instruments.....	51
3.2.2 Non-binding conventions	51
3.3 African and regional climate governance	52
3.4 P20 parliamentary commitments and the framework for parliamentary action ...	53
3.5 South African climate governance framework.....	54
3.5.1 The Constitution	54
3.5.2 National legislative and policy framework	56
3.5.3 Climate Change Act and the Just Transition Framework.....	56
3.6 Parliament's public participation framework and climate change.....	59
3.6.1 The Public Participation Framework.....	59
3.6.2 The 6th Parliament and the Climate Change Act.....	62
3.6.3 The CCA public participation process: evidence of system capacity.....	63
3.7 South African conditions and best-fit assessment criteria	64
Conditions and assessment criteria.....	65
Section 4: Situational Analysis	69
4.1 Climate governance in the 7th Parliament	69
Structural changes affecting climate oversight	69
The Presidential Climate Commission	70
The NCOP's integrative capacity	71
Parliamentary planning and the committee programming constraint	71
Parliament's public participation advancement programme	72
Contextualising the trajectory	73
4.2 Committee climate oversight responsibilities and performance	74
Methodology and sources	74
Activity classification	75
Cluster findings.....	75
Aggregate finding	77
Implications	80
4.3 Provincial legislatures and the NCOP	80
Provincial climate oversight: the evidence.....	81
The NCOP's operational gap	81
Implications for the guide	82
4.4 Public participation in climate governance: current practice and gaps.....	83
Levels 1 to 3: a functioning system with documented constraints.....	83
Level 4: the collaboration gap in climate governance	84
The feedback gap	85
Stakeholder databases and participant access	85

Climate literacy and knowledge management	86
From demonstrated capacity to standing practice	86
4.5 What the Climate Change Act requires	87
Institutional continuity and political will	89
Progression	90
4.6 Options assessed against best-fit criteria	90
Summary scoring	92
Sortition	94
Conclusion	95
Section 5: Strengthening climate deliberation in South Africa's legislatures.....	96
5.1 Assessing deliberative mechanisms for South Africa's legislatures	99
5.2 Enhancing committee climate oversight	100
5.2.1 Standing climate agenda item	100
5.2.2 Cross-portfolio coordination and climate auditing.....	101
5.2.3 Enhanced committee public hearings.....	103
5.2.4 Citizens' and civil society panels connected to committees	105
5.3 Climate in existing participation programmes	107
5.3.1 Sector parliaments	107
5.3.2 Taking Parliament to the People	108
5.3.3 Climate assemblies: international evidence and South African assessment	109
5.4 Provincial legislatures and climate governance	110
5.4.1 Provincial Forums on Climate Change and NCOP linkages	110
5.4.2 Provincial committee enhancements	112
5.5 Cross-cutting enablers	113
5.5.1 Political authorisation and cross-party positioning	113
5.5.2 Stakeholder database and feedback tracking system	113
5.5.3 MP and staff capacitation.....	116
5.6 Designing and delivering deliberative processes.....	118
5.6.1 The deliberative process lifecycle	118
5.6.2 Expert input and facilitation.....	119
5.6.3 Communication and technology.....	121
5.6.4 Budget framework	124
5.7 Phased implementation pathway	125
Conclusion	128
References	129
Academic and published sources	129
South African legislation	132
Case law.....	132
South African policy, government, and research reports.....	132
Practitioner consultations.....	133
International instruments	133

Foreword

[HOLDING DRAFT: for WFD CEO or senior director. Decision required: single WFD foreword, or dual foreword with a South African parliamentary figure (Executive Authority, Speaker, Speakers' Forum). If dual, the South African foreword would follow the WFD foreword as a separate page.]

Climate change is among the most complex governance challenges of our time. It cuts across every sector of public policy, every level of government, and every community. It requires decisions about the distribution of costs and opportunities that extend far beyond electoral cycles and that affect people who have no voice in the decisions being made on their behalf.

Parliaments are central to meeting this challenge. As the institutions through which citizens hold their governments to account, parliaments must find ways to bring the public into climate governance that go beyond the conventional hearing and submission processes most legislatures rely on. Across the world, a growing number of parliaments are experimenting with deliberative approaches that give citizens the time, information, and structured space to engage with complex policy questions and contribute to decisions that affect their lives.

South Africa brings distinctive strengths to this work. The constitutional mandate for public involvement in legislative processes is among the strongest in comparative constitutional law. The Public Participation Framework adopted by the Speakers' Forum in 2013 sets an ambitious standard that few parliamentary systems have matched. The sector parliaments, Taking Parliament to the People, public hearings reaching all nine provinces, and the constituency office system demonstrate a depth of engagement experience that many of the jurisdictions whose deliberative innovations this guide reviews have yet to develop.

The commencement of the Climate Change Act 22 of 2024 creates a specific institutional moment. The Act establishes statutory obligations for parliamentary oversight of climate governance across all spheres of government. This guide, commissioned through WFD's Environmental Democracy programme, is offered as a contribution to the discourse on how South Africa's legislatures can respond to these new obligations by building on their existing instruments and their own participatory traditions, drawing on international evidence and comparative parliamentary experience as design resources.

The guide is the product of a collaborative process involving South African parliamentary staff, international parliamentary practitioners, and the consulting team of Martina Della Togna and Mira Dutschke, with the contribution of Pete Bryant. WFD is grateful to all who gave their time and expertise to this work.

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Disclaimer

The views expressed in this guide are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, its Board, or its funders. The guide is offered as a contribution to institutional discourse and does not constitute a binding recommendation on any organ of state. This publication was produced as part of WFD's Environmental Democracy programme and made possible through funding received from the United Kingdom's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO).

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Executive Summary

This guide sets out a practical approach to strengthening citizen participation in climate and green economy governance across South Africa's legislatures, encompassing the National Assembly, the National Council of Provinces, and all nine provincial legislatures. Commissioned by the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, it follows the promulgation of the Climate Change Act 22 of 2024, which establishes statutory obligations for parliamentary oversight of climate governance and requires public involvement in line with South Africa's constitutional prescripts.

The guide locates its recommendations within Parliament's own deliberative system. South Africa's Legislative Sector adopted its Public Participation Framework in 2013, establishing a structured approach to engagement organised across four ascending levels: Inform, Consult, Involve, and Collaborate. The Framework already provides the institutional basis for deliberative climate governance. Application of its highest tier, Level 4 (Collaborate), which this guide positions as aspiring towards the most deliberative of citizen methodologies, has been uneven across committees and legislatures, and understandings of what collaborative engagement requires in practice continue to evolve.

The guide draws on international experience from jurisdictions that have piloted deliberative approaches to climate policy, presenting these as a source of adaptable lessons that can support Parliament in deepening deliberation within South Africa's constitutional and institutional context.

The guide's recommendations operationalise incrementally. Strengthening the parliamentary ecosystem's capacity to deliberate on climate is the foundation from which South Africa's legislatures can enhance their public participation and citizen deliberation programmes on climate.

The standing climate agenda item, cross-portfolio coordination, and member and staff capacitation strengthen the first.

Enhanced hearings, citizens' and civil society panels, climate content within sector parliaments, climate content within Taking Parliament to the People, and the provincial legislature options enhance the second.

The stakeholder database, the tracking system, and the communications function support both.

Key findings

The oversight opportunity:

The 7th Democratic Parliament's climate oversight is currently concentrated in two of the nineteen committees with substantive climate mandates. Activating the remaining seventeen, in line with the cross-cutting obligations the Climate Change Act distributes across departments, is the principal opportunity the guide's recommendations address. The Portfolio Committee on Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment carries the heaviest documented climate programme across all five functional clusters; the institutional task is to extend that practice across the committee system in a manner consistent with the Act's whole-of-government framing.

The participation opportunity:

The South African Legislative Sector adopted a Public Participation Framework in 2013 establishing a four-level participation ladder. Level 4 (Collaborate), the highest level, envisions citizens co-designing policy solutions with the national and provincial legislatures. This level has yet to be fully and consistently implemented across parliamentary committees for any policy domain since the PPF's adoption. Climate governance is the policy domain best suited to piloting deliberation in practice, and lessons drawn from it can inform other issues that require mainstreamed and integrated responses.

The starting advantage:

South Africa's participation baseline is substantial, grounded in a constitutional commitment to public involvement and a Public Participation Framework that already sets out the levels of engagement on which deliberative practice can build. International experience offers a rich body of practical lessons from jurisdictions that have tested deliberative approaches in climate policy, and these lessons are presented throughout the guide as adaptable resources. The opportunity is to build on Parliament's existing reach and to deepen the deliberative quality of engagement within the Framework Parliament has already adopted.

Recommendations at a glance

All options work within or build upon Parliament's existing instruments and procedures. Each is assessed against best-fit criteria derived from South Africa's institutional conditions.

Option	What it does	Timeline	Section
Tier 1: Enhancing committee work			
Standing climate agenda item	Each committee includes a regular item requiring departments to report on climate dimensions of their portfolio, budget allocations, and CCA compliance.	<i>Short-term</i>	5.2.1
Cross-portfolio coordination and climate auditing	Phased approach: coordination function through Committee of Chairpersons, progressing to cross-cutting committee with standing orders mandate. Auditor-General and SCOPA incorporate climate dimension.	<i>Short to medium-term</i>	5.2.2
Enhanced committee public hearings	Elements of deliberative methodology (evidence briefings, facilitated engagement, feedback loop) within the existing public hearing system.	<i>Short-term</i>	5.2.3
Citizens' and civil society panels	12 to 25 participants from stakeholder organisations for a multi-session process with a defined response protocol. Pilot-to-institutionalisation pathway.	<i>Short to medium-term</i>	5.2.4
Tier 2: Mainstreaming climate into participation programmes			
Climate in sector parliaments, TPTTP, and existing programmes	Three enhancements: managed stakeholder database, facilitated deliberation in breakaway sessions, tracking system connecting recommendations to committee responses.	<i>Short-term</i>	5.3

Option	What it does	Timeline	Section
Tier 3: Provincial legislatures and the NCOP			
Provincial Forums and NCOP linkages	Speakers' Forum adopts climate as sector-wide priority; NCOP tracks provincial compliance through integrative mandate. No Provincial Forum yet constituted.	<i>Short to medium-term</i>	5.4.1
Provincial committee enhancements	Standing agenda item, cross-committee coordination, and enhanced hearings adapted for provincial capacity. Place-based hearings engaging communities with direct lived experience.	<i>Short-term</i>	5.4.2

Cross-cutting institutional infrastructure

Two information management systems underpin every option.

The consolidated stakeholder database replaces fragmented committee-level lists with a single cross-committee register, open to any organisation or individual, with managed selection methodologies for each participation process.

The integrated feedback tracking system assigns a tracking identifier to every submission or recommendation arising from a participation process, requires documented committee consideration, notifies participants of the published status, and includes a compliance metric in the annual assessment of committee performance. No parliamentary system in the evidence base has yet closed this accountability loop at an operational level. If implemented, this system would position South Africa at the forefront of institutional design in this field.

Political authorisation operates at three levels (Executive Authority, House Chairpersons, Committee of Chairpersons) and is sequenced so that each phase demonstrates practical value before higher-threshold authorisations are sought. A capacitation programme integrating climate governance into existing parliamentary learning channels, delivered through the South African Parliamentary Institute (SAPI), Knowledge and Information Services (KIS), and the Legislative Sector Support (LSS), equips members and staff with the knowledge required to implement the options.

Implementation pathway

The options are sequenced in a graduated pathway. Each phase builds the conditions under which the next becomes possible.

Phase	Political leadership	Parliamentary service
Phase 1 (current term)	Standing climate agenda item (5.2.1). Cross-portfolio coordination resolution (5.2.2, Model 1). NCOP parallel directives with provincial compliance tracking.	KIS prepares portfolio-specific climate question frameworks. Database consolidation begins, building on portal pilot (5.5.2). KIS develops capacitation programme (5.5.3).
Phase 2 (12 to 24 months)	Enhanced hearing pilot approved (5.2.3). Climate mainstreaming in one sector parliament cycle (5.3.1). Speakers' Forum adopts climate as sector-wide priority (5.4.1). Panel pilot approved (5.2.4).	Enhanced hearing pilot delivered with deliberative methodology. Sector parliament climate strand with managed selection. Tracking system designed and piloted (5.5.2). Panel pilot delivered with stewarding board and response protocol. SAPI and LSS deliver provincial capacity support (5.5.3).
Phase 3 (24 to 48 months)	Rules Committee develops cross-cutting committee proposal (5.2.2, Model 2). Standing procedures for tracked recommendation responses (5.5.2). Panel mechanism embedded if pilot demonstrates value (5.2.4). Dedicated climate sector parliament if appetite demonstrated (5.3.1).	Tracking system fully operational; compliance metric in annual committee assessment. Auditor-General incorporates climate in audit mandate; SCOPA includes climate dimension. Database fully operational across all committees and programmes. Public Participation Section builds in-house facilitation capacity.

Legacy and continuity:

The 7th Democratic Parliament's Legacy Report documents the climate oversight commitments. Standing orders, where adopted, provide the stronger permanence device. The combination of legacy reports and standing orders is the strategy through which these recommendations outlast the parliamentary term in which they are initiated.

How to Use This Guide

This guide is addressed to the Parliament of the Republic of South Africa and provincial legislatures. Researchers, academics, and civil society organisations working in the climate change and development nexus can also use this guide to inform their advocacy agendas around deepening meaningful participation.

Section	Content	Read this if you need...
Section 2	The case for deliberative citizen participation in climate governance; international evidence profiling various deliberative forms; best-fit assessment of cases	The rationale for deliberative enhancement and the international design evidence
Section 3	South Africa's climate governance framework: international and national obligations; constitutional foundations; Climate Change Act provisions; the Public Participation Framework and Model as evaluative authority; best-fit conditions for the South African context	The South African legal and institutional basis for the recommendations
Section 4	Situational analysis of the 7th Democratic Parliament: the climate oversight audit across 19 committees and five functional clusters; provincial legislatures and NCOP; PPF gap assessment; statutory benchmark against the Climate Change Act	The evidence base for the guide's diagnosis and how climate change is currently being addressed in Parliament
Section 5	Recommendations: options across three tiers with design specifications, implementation steps, CCA connections, risk assessments, and best-fit evaluations; cross-cutting conditions; implementation pathway	What the guide recommends and how to implement the deliberative options presented

The Executive Summary provides a freestanding overview for readers who require the key findings and recommendations without engaging the full analysis.

The guide recommends and assesses. It provides sufficient analysis for institutional decision-making on each option, identifying what each requires, what it would achieve, and what conditions must be in place.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

Abbreviation	Full term
AG	Auditor-General
AI	artificial intelligence
AU	African Union
CAADP	Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme
CAUK	Climate Assembly UK
CCA	Climate Change Act 22 of 2024
CIC	Community Interest Company
CoGTA	Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs
COP	Conference of the Parties (under the UNFCCC)
CREDO	Centre for Research on Democracy (Stellenbosch University)
DFFE	Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment
DPME	Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation
EAC	Environmental Audit Committee (UK House of Commons)
ECID	Espace Citoyen d'Interpellation Démocratique
EU	European Union
G20	Group of Twenty
G77	Group of Seventy-Seven
GMO	genetically modified organism
GNU	Government of National Unity

Abbreviation	Full term
GRI	Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
ICT	information and communications technology
IDP	Integrated Development Plan
IIED	International Institute for Environment and Development
International IDEA	International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance
IPEN	Inter Pares network
IPU	Inter-Parliamentary Union
IRP	Integrated Resource Plan
JET	Just Energy Transition
JET-IP	Just Energy Transition Investment Plan
JOCCA	Joint Oireachtas Committee on Climate Action (Ireland)
JSC	Joint Steering Committee on Climate Change
JTF	Just Transition Framework
KIS	Knowledge and Information Services (Parliament)
KNOCA	Knowledge Network on Climate Assemblies
LSS	Legislative Sector Support
MP	Member of Parliament
NAO	National Audit Office (United Kingdom)
NCOP	National Council of Provinces
NDC	Nationally Determined Contribution
NGO	non-governmental organisation

Abbreviation	Full term
NRF	National Research Foundation
NZET	Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee (Scottish Parliament)
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
P20	Parliamentary Twenty (G20 parliamentary track)
PACT	Participation and Communities Team (Scottish Parliament)
PBO	Parliamentary Budget Office
PC	Portfolio Committee
PCC	Presidential Climate Commission
PFMA	Public Finance Management Act
PIDA	Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa
PMG	Parliamentary Monitoring Group
PPF	Public Participation Framework
PPM	Public Participation Model
REIPPPP	Renewable Energy Independent Power Producer Procurement Programme
RIA	Research Insight Agency
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SALS	South African Legislative Sector
SAPI	South African Parliamentary Institute
SC	Standing Committee
SCOPA	Standing Committee on Public Accounts
SPICe	Scottish Parliament Information Centre
TPTTP	Taking Parliament to the People

Abbreviation	Full term
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
US	United States
WFD	Westminster Foundation for Democracy

Section 1: Introduction

1.1 Purpose, scope, and audience

South Africa occupies a distinctive position in the global effort to govern climate change. As host of the seventeenth Conference of the Parties (COP17) in Durban in 2011, the country played a pivotal role in shaping the negotiating process that produced the Paris Agreement, and the constitutional commitment to environmental protection for present and future generations, enshrined in Section 24 of the Constitution, places climate governance within a rights-based framework that few national constitutions achieve. The adoption and signing into law of the Climate Change Act 22 of 2024, one of approximately fifty dedicated climate change framework laws worldwide, represents a legislative achievement that establishes statutory obligations for climate governance across all spheres of government.

South Africa's constitutional imperative for public involvement in legislative processes is equally significant. The **Public Participation Framework (PPF)** adopted by the Speakers' Forum in 2013 and the **Public Participation Model (PPM)** developed by Parliament provide the legislative sector with a comprehensive institutional framework for facilitating public involvement, from information dissemination to collaborative governance. Mechanisms such as the People's Assembly, Taking Parliament to the People, sector parliaments, and the extensive public participation process that accompanied the Climate Change Bill through all nine provincial legislatures demonstrate institutional capacity and political commitment to public engagement that many parliaments globally have yet to develop.

The **Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD)**, through its Environmental Democracy programme, works with parliaments across the world to strengthen the connections between elected institutions and the citizens they serve. This guide is offered as part of a knowledge exchange process in this growing field, drawing on international evidence and comparative parliamentary experience to contribute to the discourse on how South Africa's legislatures can continue to strengthen citizen participation in climate and green economy governance, building on the country's existing institutional instruments and its own rich participatory traditions.

The guide responds to a specific institutional moment. The **Climate Change Act** creates statutory obligations for parliamentary oversight of climate governance that are new in South African law. Departments must integrate climate change considerations into their planning, budgeting, and reporting. The Presidential Climate Commission, reconstituted on 2 January 2026 under section 10(4)(a) of the Climate Change Act with twenty-five commissioners appointed for the 2026 to 2030 tenure, will report to Parliament.

Regulations to list the Commission as a Schedule 3A public entity under the Public Finance Management Act were published for public comment in December 2025 and the listing is not yet in force. Provincial and municipal governments must constitute climate change forums, develop climate change needs assessment and response plans, and integrate them into existing provincial and municipal planning documents. These obligations generate oversight responsibilities across the committee system. The existing participation framework has not yet been operationalised to respond to these new mandates.

The guide assesses how the existing framework can be enhanced with deliberative methodology to meet the demands of climate governance, closing the gap between the PPF's Level 4 aspiration and current practice. International deliberative evidence is drawn upon as a design resource; the guide's recommendations are shaped by South African conditions.

The guide is addressed to the Parliament of the Republic of South Africa, encompassing the National Assembly, the National Council of Provinces, and all nine provincial legislatures. Its intended readers include the elected public representatives who shape the legislative and oversight agenda, the committee support staff, researchers and content advisors who prepare and facilitate committee business, the public participation practitioners responsible for managing engagement processes, and the institutional leadership responsible for strategic and operational decisions across the legislative sector.

The guide is equally relevant to the South African Parliamentary Institute (SAPI) and the Legislative Sector Support network, which serve as the primary vehicles for capacity development and knowledge dissemination across the sector. Civil society organisations, researchers, and academics working to deepen accountability and participatory democracy in climate or other areas of governance may also find use in this guide.

The guide provides considered analysis for institutional decision-making on each option, identifying what each requires, what it would achieve, and what conditions must be in place.

1.2 Methodology

The guide's findings rest primarily on documentary analysis: desktop research constitutes the primary evidence base; consultations serve a validation and supplementation function; and the international literature provides the comparative design principles against which options are developed. The guide's diagnostic conclusions are subject to the limitations of publicly available records, particularly for provincial legislatures where monitoring infrastructure is less developed than at the national level.

Documentary analysis

The documentary analysis encompasses the international, regional, constitutional and legislative framework (focussing on the Constitution, Climate Change Act 22 of 2024, and Just Transition Framework); Parliament's institutional instruments (PPF, PPM, Reviewed Strategic Plan for the 7th Parliament, Annual Performance Plans, 6th Parliament Legacy Report, programme documents); committee records from the Parliamentary Monitoring Group covering the period May 2024 to March 2026; provincial legislature records; the Climate Action Tracker governance assessment for South Africa; and the international evidence base on deliberative democracy and climate governance, including publications from the OECD, IPU, International IDEA, WFD, and the IPEN network.

The Parliamentary Monitoring Group (pmg.org.za), an independent civil society organisation, provides the most comprehensive publicly available monitoring of national parliamentary committee proceedings and serves as the primary source for the committee climate oversight assessment.

Practitioner consultations and event participation

Four consultations with incumbent parliament managers provided operational evidence on how deliberative mechanisms function within parliamentary settings, what design features determine whether outputs influence policy, and what practical lessons are transferable to the South African context.

Table 1.1: Practitioner consultations

Citation format	Participants	Date
(Parliamentary consultation, 24 March 2026)	Convened by Dr Leon Gabriel, Division Manager: Knowledge and Information Services. Chaired by Lucky Thamsanqa Makamba, Divisional Manager: Core Business Support. Dr Momelezi Kula, Section Manager: Public Participation; Nathalia Borchard, Section Manager: Committees; Jacqueline Thomas, Public Education Office; Nhlanhla Ginindza, Content Advisor, Portfolio Committee on Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment.	24 March 2026
(Scottish Parliament consultation, 25 March 2026)	Graeme Cook (Head of Office, Scottish Parliament Information Centre, SPICe); Alistair Stoddart (Senior Participation Specialist, Participation and Communities Team, PACT); Abbi Hobbs (seconded to the Conveners Group); and the clerking team of the Net Zero, Energy, and Transport Committee.	25 March 2026

Citation format	Participants	Date
(EAC consultation, 26 March 2026)	Ian Cruse, Clerk of the Environmental Audit Committee, UK House of Commons.	26 March 2026
(CAUK consultation, 31 March 2026)	Chris Shaw, Clerk, Home Affairs Committee, UK House of Commons; former lead official for Climate Assembly UK (2019 to 2020); IPEN Executive Board member (deliberative democracy strand).	31 March 2026

Source: Consulting team consultations, March 2026. Contributions provided as subject-matter specialist input, not institutional endorsement.

The consulting team also participated in the Deliberative Democracy in Africa: DemocracyNext Paper Launch Event and the South African parliamentary webinar on Advancing Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights in the Time of Climate Change (March 2026).

The climate oversight audit

The situational analysis in Section 4 is anchored in a climate oversight audit of 19 national parliamentary committees. The audit examines every committee whose jurisdictional mandate creates substantive exposure to climate governance obligations under the Climate Change Act. Committees are assessed across five functional climate clusters derived from the Act's requirements:

Table 1.2: Functional climate clusters used in the committee oversight audit

Cluster	Climate governance dimension
1	Greenhouse gas mitigation
2	Climate adaptation and resilience
3	Climate finance and fiscal instruments
4	The Just Transition
5	International climate obligations and diplomacy

Source: Climate Change Act 22 of 2024. Clusters derived from the Act's distribution of obligations across departmental mandates.

The assessment uses a binary classification of active or inactive for each committee, with the evidence column providing the analytical detail that shows what activity or inactivity looks like for that committee.

Each committee is assessed against each cluster for which its mandate creates substantive exposure, producing a profile that identifies where climate oversight is concentrated and where it is absent. The assessment period is confined to the 7th Parliament (May 2024 to March 2026), and PMG records serve as the primary source, with the acknowledged limitation that PMG's monitoring does not capture all committee activity and does not extend to provincial legislatures beyond the Western Cape.

Evaluative framework

The PPF's 'best-fit' evaluative framing serves as the South African institutional authority throughout the guide, grounded in the PPF's own commitment to contextually appropriate design. The guide applies two tests to every option: institutional feasibility, asking whether the option can be implemented within Parliament's existing legal, procedural, and resource framework; and operational soundness, asking whether the design meets the conditions identified in Section 3, including multilingual participation across 12 official languages, the triple crisis of poverty, inequality, and unemployment, geographic dispersal, structural barriers to participation by the most affected, and South Africa's political culture of organised representation. International models are design resources; the institutional expression is shaped by South African conditions, South African instruments, and South African institutional authority.

Section 2: The case for deliberation in climate governance

2.1 The case for deliberative citizen participation in climate governance

Democracies internationally are facing a legitimacy crisis, with mounting empirical evidence of declining public trust in democratic institutions and elected representatives. Climate change compounds this challenge; the governance issue that most urgently requires sustained public consent, long-term political commitment, and intergenerational planning is competing for attention with immediate pressures on energy security, fiscal stability, and geopolitical order that erode the political conditions under which ambitious climate action can be sustained.

The United Nations Development Programme finds that trust in government remains fragile in many countries, with perceptions of exclusion, inequality, and unresponsiveness driving disillusionment (UNDP, 2022). The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development reports persistently low and uneven trust in public institutions across member states (OECD, 2021), while global survey data indicates declining confidence in political leadership and democratic processes more broadly (Edelman Trust Barometer, 2023). These trends are reflected in falling participation rates in conventional democratic mechanisms, alongside a widening gap between the complexity of contemporary governance challenges and the institutional channels through which citizens can meaningfully influence decision-making.

International organisations working to advance and deepen democratic practice, among them International IDEA, the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD), the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and the Inter Pares network (IPEN), have responded by investing significant resources towards understanding how deliberative methodologies can strengthen the relationship between citizens and the institutions that govern on their behalf.

Climate change governance has emerged as a particular focus of this institutional effort. Climate policy presents features that make it especially difficult for conventional representative systems to process: it requires decisions with consequences that extend far beyond electoral cycles; it cuts across the jurisdictional boundaries of portfolio committees and government departments; it involves genuinely contested trade-offs between present livelihoods and future ecological stability; and it intersects with deep structural inequalities in ways that

mean the communities most affected are often those least represented in existing participation mechanisms.

The OECD's comparative evidence, drawn from a database of 574 documented deliberative processes across OECD and non-OECD countries, identifies climate and environmental governance as the policy domain most frequently addressed through deliberative processes internationally (OECD, 2020). This confirms that climate governance has become the testing ground on which the deliberative turn in democratic practice is being developed, evaluated, and, in a growing number of jurisdictions, institutionalised (OECD, 2023).

The international literature identifies five features of climate governance that, taken together, make the case for structured citizen deliberation especially compelling.

WHY CLIMATE IS DIFFERENT

Climate governance carries five characteristics that, taken together, make the case for structured citizen deliberation especially compelling:

- Continuity across parliamentary terms: mitigation costs are immediate and concentrated while benefits are long-term and disproportionately enjoyed by people who cannot yet vote
- Cross-cutting reach across committee portfolios: no single committee owns climate, and committee-specific participation mechanisms cannot address its breadth.
- Contested trade-offs under uncertainty: which transition pathway, at what pace, with what distributional consequences
- The intersection with structural inequality and the just transition: in South Africa these shape whether the green economy reproduces or addresses existing patterns of exclusion.
- The new institutional requirements introduced by the Climate Change Act 22 of 2024, including Provincial Forums on Climate Change, municipal planning obligations, and PCC reporting to Parliament.

Continuity across parliamentary terms:

Climate governance challenges the continuity of political commitment across parliamentary terms. The costs of mitigation and adaptation are immediate and concentrated, while the benefits are diffuse, long-term, and disproportionately enjoyed by people who cannot yet vote. Electoral cycles create incentives to defer those costs and discount future benefits, producing what Dryzek (2009) identifies as a democratic deficit specific to long-horizon governance challenges. The WFD guide recognises this directly, observing that deliberative processes enable citizens to identify long-term solutions that extend beyond short-term policies linked to electoral cycles (WFD/newDemocracy, 2021).

Ireland's Citizens' Assembly (2016–2018) confirms this in practice: the Assembly's thirteen climate recommendations, all passed with over 80 per cent support, produced legislative change through the Oireachtas committee pathway that conventional political processes had been unable to achieve over the preceding decade (Houses of the Oireachtas, 2018).

Cross-cutting across committee portfolios:

Climate governance also cuts across the jurisdictional boundaries through which parliaments organise their work. No single committee owns it. The WFD guide describes climate policies as requiring 'deep cross-sectoral reforms of current patterns of economic activity that reach into every corner of daily life' (WFD/newDemocracy, 2021). Existing participation mechanisms, which are committee-specific, cannot address climate's cross-cutting character. Deliberative mechanisms designed to operate across portfolio boundaries can, as the UK Climate Assembly (2020) demonstrated when six House of Commons Select Committees jointly commissioned a single deliberative process that cut across their individual jurisdictions (Climate Assembly UK, 2020).

Who participates in climate governance decisions:

Who participates in climate governance decisions is a critical question, given the structural inequities that shape whose voices currently reach decision-makers and whose do not. Climate policy choices involve genuinely uncertain trade-offs: which transition pathway, at what pace, with what distributional consequences. The WFD guide frames this in terms directly relevant to parliamentary practice: 'mitigation targets can be attained in different ways, and the different policy choices will create different sets of winners and losers and may require different adjustment measures' (WFD/newDemocracy, 2021). The OECD's evidence base demonstrates that structured citizen engagement with contested evidence produces recommendations that carry both democratic legitimacy and technical depth, precisely because the deliberative process requires participants to engage with evidence, interrogate expert assumptions, and weigh trade-offs in ways that technocratic planning and unstructured consultation cannot replicate independently (OECD, 2020).

The manner of consultation and whose voices reach oversight:

The manner in which citizens are consulted shapes whose experience reaches parliamentary oversight processes. Curato, Smith, and Willis (2024) identify the challenge that climate governance poses in the Global South as simultaneously establishing direction for economic transition, managing significant changes to livelihoods, and developing a social mandate for those changes by engaging civil society and responding to rising public concern. Conventional consultation mechanisms tend to reproduce existing access patterns, engaging established stakeholders while the communities most directly affected by climate policy remain outside the room.

Deliberative methodology is designed to address this: participant selection, facilitation, and evidence provision are structured to reach the people that conventional processes miss, and to enable those participants to articulate their needs directly to the oversight processes responsible for holding the government to account.

New climate governance frameworks:

The creation of new climate governance frameworks generates specific parliamentary oversight responsibilities and provides institutional hooks to which deliberative options can connect. In South Africa, the Climate Change Act 22 of 2024 creates such requirements, examined in detail in Section 3 of this guide, while the country's constitutional and statutory participation directives provide the institutional foundation assessed in the situational analysis in Section 4.

Parliaments as deliberative institutions

Parliaments are, by their nature, deliberative institutions. Public representatives debate legislation, scrutinise the executive, and weigh competing arguments in committee and in plenary; this is the institutional foundation on which representative democracy rests. Public consultation extends this by inviting citizen input through submissions processes, public hearings, and open comment periods.

Deliberation as defined by deliberative theorists of the Habermasian tradition describes a quality of group discourse in which participants weigh evidence, listen actively to multiple perspectives, give reasons for their positions, and work towards common ground on a shared problem (Mansbridge et al., 2012; OECD, 2020).

Deliberative processes are a class of institutionalised mechanisms, including citizens' assemblies, panels, and juries, characterised by structured recruitment, a learning phase in which participants engage with a range of evidence, facilitated deliberation, and outputs designed to feed into parliamentary decision-making. These mechanisms internalise the full sequence of informing, consulting, involving, and collaborating within a single institutional form, linking the phases so that each supports the next (OECD, 2020). The guide's options work at both registers: introducing deliberative methodology into existing participation activities where it can be designed in, and introducing institutional forms that carry the full deliberative sequence within committee practice. The South African definition of deliberative processes is rooted in the Public Participation Framework outlined in section 3.

The OECD's participation spectrum locates these activities at the inform, consult, and engagement levels (OECD, 2022). The international evidence reviewed in the following section documents how parliamentary participation can be further strengthened beyond these levels: through participants selected to be reflective of the affected population, balanced evidence provision that enables those participants to engage with competing claims, facilitated processes in which participants interrogate expert assumptions and weigh trade-offs, and defined

institutional pathways through which the outputs are received and responded to by the commissioning body.

The IPEN guide identifies four operational criteria for this form of engagement: participants are provided with a range of information, engage in evidence-based reasoning, can deliberate as equals, and represent diverse viewpoints or are reflective of the affected population (IPEN, 2025). The guide's options span this spectrum, from immediate enhancements to existing committee practice through to medium-term institutional innovations, and each is assessed against the design conditions the international evidence identifies as critical.

2.2 Deliberative democracy: international responses

The guide draws on the deliberative systems perspective (Mansbridge et al., 2012; Dryzek, 2009; 2010; Parkinson and Mansbridge, 2012), which holds that deliberation can be distributed across the full range of democratic institutions, civic associations, media environments, and informal public spaces through which citizens form, revise, and express their political judgements. The quality of any democratic system's deliberative character depends on how these multiple sites interact with one another. What matters is the cumulative quality of how evidence, citizen experience, and institutional decision-making connect across sites: a single well-designed assembly cannot compensate for a committee system in which evidence provision is absent, feedback to participants is non-existent, and oversight is concentrated in a single portfolio. Each transmission point within a deliberative system is a site where quality can be strengthened or where it breaks down. The options this guide presents are designed to address specific transmission gaps identified through the situational analysis in Section 4.

The following reviews assess six landmark publications that form the guide's evidence base. They assess how citizen participation performs in climate contexts specifically, and the design conditions critical for that performance, including institutional integration, participant selection, feedback mechanisms, inclusion, and climate-specific design. The reviews start with the broadest evaluative frameworks and empirical base and move towards the parliament-specific practical guidance that connects most directly to the options the guide presents.

2.2.1 OECD Guidelines for Citizen Participation Processes (2022)

KEY CONTRIBUTION AND CLIMATE RELEVANCE

The Guidelines set out a ten-step lifecycle and nine quality principles (purpose, accountability, transparency, representativeness, information, deliberation, inclusiveness, time, and integrity) against which any participation process can be assessed. They speak directly to climate governance because they address complex, cross-cutting, long-term policy questions with intergenerational dimensions. Their requirements for balanced evidence, adequate deliberation time, and clear pathways

from participation outputs to institutional decisions align with the mandates carried by South Africa's parliamentary participation framework.

Containing the most comprehensive process design framework, these Guidelines set out a ten-step implementation sequence covering the full lifecycle of a participation process, from problem definition and participant selection through evidence provision and facilitation to deliberation and follow-up. The Guidelines articulate nine quality principles against which any such process can be assessed: purpose, accountability, transparency, representativeness, information, deliberation, inclusiveness, time, and integrity. The publication is directly relevant to climate governance because it addresses participation in complex, cross-cutting, long-term policy challenges with intergenerational dimensions. The requirements for balanced information provision, adequate time for deliberation, and clear accountability pathways connecting participation outputs to institutional decision-making are reflected in South Africa's current parliamentary participation mandates.

2.2.2 OECD Catching the Deliberative Wave (2020)

KEY CONTRIBUTION AND CLIMATE RELEVANCE

Drawing on 574 deliberative processes, this publication identifies the institutional connection between a deliberative process and the decision-making body as the single most important design variable.

Processes commissioned by parliamentary bodies with defined response pathways produce stronger policy outcomes than those commissioned by executives without uptake mechanisms.

The publication tracks a marked acceleration in climate-specific deliberation from 2019 onwards and positions Parliament as the appropriate institutional home for deliberative innovation in South Africa.

This publication analyses the conditions that generate institutionally consequential outputs. Most of the processes were in OECD (primarily Global North) countries, with only a small sample from the Global South. The central finding is that representative deliberative processes produce qualitatively different outputs from conventional consultation. They use random selection (sortition) to assemble a broadly representative group of citizens who deliberate on a defined question after receiving balanced evidence. Deliberation generates informed public judgement, which differs from raw public opinion in that it reflects what citizens conclude after engaging with evidence and with one another. It surfaces trade-offs and distributional consequences that conventional hearings tend to obscure and it

produces recommendations whose democratic legitimacy can provide political cover for difficult policy choices.

The publication tracks a marked acceleration in climate-specific deliberative processes from 2019 onwards. The convergence of climate emergency declarations across multiple jurisdictions and the perceived inadequacy of conventional policy-making processes to deliver the transformative action required, drive this trend.

The institutional connection between the deliberative process and the decision-making body is the single most important design variable: processes commissioned by parliamentary bodies with defined response pathways produce stronger policy outcomes than those commissioned by executives without institutional uptake mechanisms.

This positions Parliament as the appropriate institutional home for deliberative innovations in South Africa.

2.2.3 OECD Eight Ways to Institutionalise Deliberative Democracy (2023)

KEY CONTRIBUTION AND CLIMATE RELEVANCE

This publication maps eight pathways through which deliberative processes can move from one-off experiments to standing features of democratic governance. The models include permanent standing bodies, deliberation connected to parliamentary committees, standing citizens' advisory panels, sequenced deliberation across the policy cycle, and one-off assemblies commissioned for specific policy questions. The institutionalisation lens is climate-relevant because long-horizon policy challenges such as the just transition require participation that endures across electoral cycles and parliamentary terms.

The eight institutionalisation models encompass permanent standing bodies with broad agenda-setting power (exemplified by the Ostbelgien Citizens' Council in Belgium's German-speaking Community), deliberation connected to parliamentary committees (exemplified by the Brussels Mixed Deliberative Committees), standing citizens' advisory panels, sequenced deliberative processes throughout the policy cycle, citizen-initiated deliberation rights, mandatory deliberation before specified public decisions, deliberation embedded in local strategic planning, and one-off assemblies commissioned by parliament for specific policy questions.

2.2.4 International IDEA, Deliberative Democracy and Climate Change (2024)

KEY CONTRIBUTION AND CLIMATE RELEVANCE

The first systematic analysis of climate assemblies in the Global South, this publication treats citizens' assemblies as a craft and encourages adaptation to each social, political, and institutional setting. The Amazonian assemblies in Pará, Brazil, and the (Re)surgentes intercity assemblies across Colombia, Mexico, and Argentina illustrate what the authors describe as deliberative transposition: democratic innovations travelling across contexts without reproducing the originating model. The publication's engagement with imbizo, lekgotla, and indaba situates South Africa's own deliberative traditions within the international evidence.

Global South deliberative traditions are identified as contributions to the international evidence, with their own institutional memory and design intelligence grounded in local conditions (Curato, Smith, and Willis, 2024; Escobar and Henderson, 2024).

The Global South evidence base includes the Amazonian climate assemblies in Pará state, Brazil, which adapted sortition-based selection to local contexts including communities affected by extractivism and deforestation, producing a design methodology transferable to South Africa's coal transition communities. The Latin American (Re)surgentes intercity climate assemblies across Colombia, Mexico, and Argentina demonstrate what Rey and Latorre (2026) term 'deliberative transposition': the process through which democratic innovations travel across contexts without reproducing the originating model.

The analysis of the conditions under which climate assemblies can function in contexts of structural inequality, linguistic diversity, and limited institutional capacity speaks directly to the South African challenge that Section 5 addresses.

The publication also frames the relationship between South Africa's own deliberative traditions, including imbizo, lekgotla, and indaba as forms of community-based participatory decision-making (Kiyala, 2023), and the internationally documented deliberative innovation. South Africa's traditions carry institutional memory and cultural authority in ways that imported models cannot replicate; the guide positions the PPF's 'best-fit' epistemological framing in this context.

2.2.5 IPEN Guides on Citizen Engagement for Parliaments (2025)

KEY CONTRIBUTION AND CLIMATE RELEVANCE

This guide provides parliament-specific guidance on how legislatures can structure citizen engagement on technically complex oversight questions, locating deliberative engagement within the existing functions of parliamentary committees: legislation, oversight, budgeting, and representation.

This guide identified four operational criteria for deliberative practice: that participants are provided with a range of information about the topic under consideration, they engage in evidence-based reasoning, they can deliberate as equals, and they represent diverse viewpoints or are reflective of the population or a sub-group. These provide the benchmark against which the situational analysis in Section 4 assesses South Africa's current committee practice.

2.2.6 WFD Introduction to Deliberative Democracy for Members of Parliament (2021)

KEY CONTRIBUTION AND CLIMATE RELEVANCE

Co-published with newDemocracy Foundation, this guide offers the parliamentary entry point for commissioning deliberative processes through an eight principles framework that supports elected representatives' constitutional mandate.

Its analysis of the UK Climate Assembly identifies the absence of a committee response protocol, the lack of integration with a live inquiry, and mid-process electoral disruption as design lessons that the options in Section 5 address.

Case material from Kenya, The Gambia, Australia, Europe, and Latin America extends the comparative base well beyond OECD evidence.

Together with the newDemocracy Foundation (2021), this document is relevant to the South African context in which deliberative innovation must avoid the perception of bypassing or undermining elected representatives. The document frames deliberative processes as complementary to and supportive of parliamentary authority.

The analysis of the UK Climate Assembly (2020) provides an institutional assessment of the strengths and limitations of parliamentary commissioning.

The Assembly's commissioning by six House of Commons Select Committees gave it democratic legitimacy and cross-party authority, while the absence of a pre-defined committee response protocol meant that recommendations carried influence without being actionable: 'agenda-setting influence at best.'

Together with the lack of integration with a live committee inquiry, and the disruption caused by a general election that changed committee membership during the process, these are design specifications that the options presented in Section 5 of this guide address. The WFD publication also includes case studies from Africa (Kenya, The Gambia), Australia, Europe, and Latin America, providing a comparative base that extends well beyond the OECD's predominantly Global North evidence.

2.3 Case studies in UK and Europe

The case studies in this and the following section draw on published sources from the OECD, International IDEA, and the academic literature, supplemented by practitioner consultations conducted with the Scottish Parliament (25 March 2026), the Clerk of the UK Environmental Audit Committee (26 March 2026), and the lead official responsible for Climate Assembly UK (31 March 2026), as well as the comparative evidence contributed by Pete Bryant as the consulting team's deliberative process design specialist. Where cases are drawn from practitioner knowledge, they are identified as such.

The deliberative evidence base encompasses a range of methodologies. The Danish Board of Technology's consensus conference model (1987 onwards) is the earliest institutionalised form of citizen deliberation connected to parliamentary decision-making. Fishkin's deliberative polling methodology, refined across applications in the United States, Japan, Uganda, and elsewhere since 1994, demonstrated how informed public judgement differs from immediate opinion. Over the past decade, citizens' assemblies, people's panels, and mixed deliberative committees have extended the evidence base further. The cases reviewed below focus on the three mechanism types most directly relevant to the options this guide presents: climate citizens' assemblies, cross-portfolio coordination mechanisms, and committee-connected panels.

Climate citizens' assemblies

Ireland's Citizens' Assembly (2016–2018)

The Irish Citizens' Assembly stands as one of the most consequential climate deliberative processes to date in terms of traceable legislative outcomes. The Assembly, commissioned by the Houses of the Oireachtas and comprising 99 randomly selected citizens, addressed climate change as one of five topics over its eighteen-month programme. Its thirteen climate recommendations, all passed with over 80 per cent support, were referred to a specially established Joint Oireachtas Committee on Climate Action (JOCCA), which issued 78 recommendations of its own in response.

The JOCCA supported all Citizens' Assembly recommendations except one, a proposed tax on agricultural greenhouse gas emissions, which the JOCCA did not adopt following representations from agricultural stakeholders. The Dáil declared a climate and biodiversity emergency in May 2019, directly citing the Assembly's work, and the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 was shaped by the JOCCA's recommendations (Houses of the Oireachtas, 2018; OECD, 2020).

The parliamentary pathway was the mechanism of influence: the dedicated joint committee with a defined remit to receive and respond to the Assembly's report created the institutional framework through which citizen recommendations became legislative action. The Assembly itself held no legislative power; its influence operated through the committee system.

French Convention Citoyenne pour le Climat (2019–2020)

The French Convention Citoyenne pour le Climat represents the most ambitious climate assembly in terms of scope and participant numbers, and the case that most clearly illustrates the importance of a defined parliamentary pathway between deliberative outputs and legislative response. Convened by the President through the Conseil économique, social et environnemental, the Convention brought 150 randomly selected citizens together over nine months to address how France could reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 40 per cent by 2030 in a spirit of social justice. Its 149 recommendations were initially received with a presidential commitment to transmit them 'without filter' to Parliament or referendum; in practice, the subsequent Climate and Resilience Bill incorporated modified versions of approximately 60 per cent of the recommendations, while the remainder were diluted, abandoned, or blocked. Participants themselves rated the government's response at 3.3 out of 10 in a February 2021 evaluation (KNOCA; OECD, 2020).

The Convention illustrates what happens when a deliberative process is executive commissioned without a defined parliamentary accountability pathway: the absence of an institutional mechanism obliging Parliament to receive, consider, and respond to recommendations meant the executive retained discretion over which outputs were taken forward, with the result that participant expectations and institutional reality diverged sharply. This case is directly relevant to the guide's insistence that the institutional relationship between any deliberative process and its commissioning body must be specified in advance.

Climate Assembly UK (2020)

Climate Assembly UK, commissioned jointly by six House of Commons Select Committees, is one of the strongest examples of parliamentary commissioning in the climate deliberation evidence base. Multi-committee commissioning was itself an institutional innovation, bringing together six committees with overlapping climate responsibilities to share the analytical and political ownership of the process. A practitioner consultation conducted with the lead official responsible for commissioning and overseeing the Assembly supplements the published record

with institutional detail that carries direct implications for the options this guide presents (CAUK consultation, 31 March 2026).

The Assembly arose from a convergence of factors: available research budget across six committees, the political opportunity created by Parliament's legislation of net zero in June 2019 without specifying an implementation pathway, external civil society pressure for a citizens' assembly on climate, and the willingness of two committee chairs to champion the innovation. The Assembly's question was deliberately scoped to address implementation pathways, how the UK should reach net zero by 2050, within an already legislated commitment. This avoided politicisation and aligned the process directly with Parliament's oversight role: the unanswered question was what the net zero commitment required of citizens in terms of cost of living, transport, diet, housing, and energy use, and elected representatives operating within five-year electoral cycles were reluctant to spell out those implications. The Assembly was designed to surface which trade-offs the public was prepared to accept (Climate Assembly UK, 2020; CAUK consultation, 31 March 2026).

Cross-party positioning was central to the Assembly's credibility. The process was framed throughout as serving Parliament's oversight function, comparable to a consultation or a public inquiry. When the Assembly's report was debated on the floor of the House of Commons, the debate was not politicised; commentators across the political spectrum found the outputs credible enough to claim as supporting their respective positions, which served as the marker of methodological success. This credibility rested on a deliberate insistence that the methodology had to be beyond reproach: participant selection, evidence provision, facilitation, and question framing were each designed to withstand scrutiny from across the political spectrum, on the basis that if any aspect of the process could be challenged as biased, the outputs would be dismissed regardless of their substantive quality (WFD/newDemocracy, 2021; CAUK consultation, 31 March 2026).

The Assembly's findings reached climate policy formation through several institutional channels. The statutory Climate Change Committee integrated them into its Sixth Carbon Budget analysis, an influential pathway through which the Assembly's substantive contributions shaped national climate policy thinking. Government officials engaged with the recommendations across departments. Practitioner reflection six years on identifies no direct implementation pathway traceable to the Assembly's recommendations themselves; the substantive contribution flowed through advisory bodies, individual officials, and the broader policy debate the Assembly opened (CAUK consultation, 31 March 2026). The institutional lesson the consultation surfaced concerned the value of formalising committee follow-through arrangements at the design stage: the original commissioning envisaged each of the six committees following up recommendations within its own portfolio, and a general election during the process altered committee membership in ways the original design had not anticipated. The UK Parliament is now developing a set of protocols to institutionalise the practices and approaches that guide ongoing and future

deliberation initiatives, work the guide draws on with appreciation (CAUK consultation, 31 March 2026).

The Assembly demonstrated that parliamentary-led deliberation can achieve high credibility, legitimacy, and agenda-setting influence when grounded in strong design principles. The institutional lessons, commissioning within a legislated commitment, cross-party ownership, methodology beyond reproach, defined committee response obligations, and sustainable funding, inform the design specifications for the options presented in Section 5.

BOX 2.1

Climate Assembly UK: practitioner findings beyond the published record

Climate Assembly UK (2020) brought 108 randomly selected participants together over six weekends to consider how the UK should reach net zero by 2050. The practitioner consultation conducted on 31 March 2026 surfaces five operational findings that supplement the published record and carry direct implications for the options in Section 5.

Methodology beyond reproach. Every design choice, including participant selection, evidence provision, facilitation, and question framing, was built to withstand cross-party scrutiny. The operating principle was that any contestable element would discredit the substantive outputs, regardless of their quality.

The feedback gap. Participants began positive about the experience. As government action on the recommendations failed to materialise over time, satisfaction declined, and some participants became vocal critics. The practitioner assessment is that participation without a credible feedback loop generates expectations and then visibly fails to honour them.

Tracking deficit. Westminster operates no formal system for tracking recommendations arising from participation processes. Tracking is informal and managed differently by each committee, with no shared register and no standard reporting back to participants.

Mid-process electoral disruption. An unanticipated general election altered committee membership during the Assembly. The political ownership that joint commissioning had built across six committees was severed, and institutional memory of the design choices was lost with departing members and staff.

Institutionalisation underway. The UK Parliament is now developing a set of protocols to institutionalise the practices and approaches that should guide ongoing and future deliberation initiatives, work this guide draws on with appreciation.

Source: Climate Assembly UK (2020); CAUK consultation, 31 March 2026.

Scotland's Climate Assembly (2020–2021)

Scotland's Climate Assembly was government-commissioned with cross-party support. Over one hundred participants produced recommendations on how Scotland should address climate change. The Assembly reported to the Scottish Parliament, and some recommendations were adopted. The Scottish experience is most instructive for its institutional aftermath: the Scottish Parliament subsequently developed a People's Panel model through its Participation and Communities Team (PACT), creating a repeatable mechanism for sortition-based citizen engagement connected to committee inquiries.

The People's Panel process involves the Sortition Foundation's open-source algorithm randomly selecting postcodes across Scotland; approximately 5,000 invitations yield around 300 responses, from which a stratified model populates 25 positions against demographic targets within a margin of approximately four per cent. Participants are paid at the living wage rate for the hours committed, a design feature that officials identified as essential for inclusion despite some conveners' preference for a civic duty model that would exclude those unable to participate without compensation.

A stewarding board, including external stakeholders, designs the questions independently of members to prevent accusations of leading outcomes. Reports go to the relevant committee, which passes them to the cabinet secretary for a formal government response.

A standing order change now requires chamber time for People's Panel reports (Scottish Parliament consultation, 25 March 2026).

Cross-portfolio coordination mechanisms

Two international models address the structural problem that climate governance cuts across portfolio committee boundaries, creating a coordination gap that single-committee oversight cannot resolve.

Scottish Parliament's Conveners Group

The Scottish Parliament's Conveners Group designated climate change as a strategic priority for the current parliamentary session, providing what officials described as 'political cover' for committees and staff to act on climate across all portfolio areas (Scottish Parliament consultation, 25 March 2026).

Seven specific commitments were agreed against which progress is reported annually. In the most recent assessment, thirteen committees reported having conducted climate scrutiny in some form, ranging from direct climate inquiries to the integration of climate considerations into their existing portfolio work. The mechanism operates within the existing institutional framework and can be activated without rule changes, through the Committee of Chairpersons or an equivalent leadership body. Its limitation is that it depends on the political will of each new parliamentary session; the strategic priority must be re-adopted, and there is no institutional guarantee that a future Conveners Group will maintain it.

Scottish officials acknowledged that legacy reports produced by committees at the end of each five-year session, documenting achievements and recommendations for successors, serve as the primary institutionalisation device, creating a record and an expectation that the incoming parliament addresses the outgoing parliament's unfinished work (Scottish Parliament consultation, 25 March 2026).

UK Environmental Audit Committee

The Environmental Audit Committee (EAC) of the UK House of Commons provides the strongest international model for permanent cross-portfolio climate scrutiny within a parliamentary setting. Established in 1997 under Standing Order No. 152A, the EAC has operated continuously for 28 years, surviving every change of government without interruption. The standing orders foundation is the institutional permanence mechanism: unlike resolution-based bodies that lapse at the end of a parliamentary term, the EAC's mandate is embedded in the procedural framework and requires a deliberate parliamentary decision to revoke (EAC consultation, 26 March 2026).

The EAC's cross-cutting mandate enables it to scrutinise the climate and environmental performance of any government department, including departments that do not consider climate part of their core remit. The model is distinguished by three operational features. Cross-pollination of oversight: the EAC's reports cross-reference those of relevant portfolio committees, and its evidence sessions bring ministers from different departments into the same hearing. When the EAC examines housing policy, it brings the housing and environmental ministers together, requiring them to respond to each other's commitments in the same session. Departments cannot give inconsistent accounts of their climate obligations when required to account alongside the departments with which those obligations intersect. Drawing on the National Audit Office's analytical capacity: the EAC's own team is small, and it draws on the National Audit Office (NAO) for environmental audit data and analysis, giving it scrutiny capacity that a small parliamentary team could not generate independently. This is directly relevant to any context where a cross-cutting committee needs analytical depth without requiring the parliamentary budget to absorb new capacity costs. Institutional continuity through standing orders: the standing orders foundation provides continuity that is not dependent on the political commitment of any particular set of members or any single parliamentary term (EAC consultation, 26 March 2026).

The EAC's evidence cycle provides the most concrete operational model for a functioning feedback loop within committee proceedings. Terms of reference are published specifying the inquiry question and the evidence the committee seeks. A defined submission window, typically six weeks, opens for written evidence. The committee team synthesises the submissions. Written evidence is published with parliamentary privilege. All submissions are listed in the committee's final report with references showing how the evidence was used. The government is required to respond to the committee's recommendations within two months. The critical design feature is the documented connection between evidence submitted and committee findings: contributors can trace how their input influenced the

committee's conclusions. This evidence cycle addresses one of the most significant gaps identified across the international case studies: the absence of systematic feedback from deliberative or participatory processes to the participants and communities that contributed to them (EAC consultation, 26 March 2026).

The EAC has also developed deliberative methodology within standard committee inquiry processes, demonstrating three approaches that are transferable to other parliamentary contexts.

In a sustainable housing inquiry, the committee engaged three schools in a scenario exercise in which students modelled competing design priorities for eco-villages, articulating and defending trade-offs between environmental performance and housing affordability before presenting their findings to committee members.

In an inquiry into climate-damaging refrigerants, the committee brought in the mechanics who use these materials to co-design practical solutions, a form of collaborative engagement in which the affected stakeholder (the mechanics) participate in the design of policy responses.

In targeted outreach for underrepresented groups, the committee's public engagement team identified communities disproportionately affected by the policy under scrutiny who were absent from written submissions and actively recruited their participation through visits, roundtables, and community-based engagement.

The common design principle is the shift from passive evidence reception to structured engagement in which participants process information, weigh trade-offs, and contribute to the committee's analytical work (EAC consultation, 26 March 2026).

The EAC's political sustainability offers a final institutional lesson. Cross-party consensus was enabled by the framing of climate change as an economic challenge through the Stern Review, which created the political space for a committee that scrutinises all departments without being characterised as serving any single party's agenda. Members who were initially resistant to deliberative public engagement found they valued the process, recognised the public benefit of being seen to engage citizens directly, and appreciated having their policy assumptions tested by informed participants (EAC consultation, 26 March 2026).

Committee-connected panels

Scottish Parliament People's Panel (2024)

The Scottish Parliament People's Panel represents one of the strongest existing models for committee-connected citizen deliberation and carries the most direct relevance for this guide's options.

The Conveners Group established the Panel to support the Net Zero, Energy and Transport (NZET) Committee's scrutiny of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009. Twenty-three participants, selected by lottery, worked over two weekends

and two online sessions, and their recommendations directly informed the NZET Committee's subsequent work (Scottish Parliament, 2024).

The model's strengths for application in other parliamentary contexts are considerable: it is small enough to be operationally manageable; it connects directly to a specific committee inquiry on a defined question; it uses sortition at a manageable scale; it builds institutional learning incrementally; and it positions the parliamentary committee as both commissioning and receiving body, creating the accountability pathway that the French and UK cases identified as absent.

Brussels Mixed Deliberative Committees (2019 onwards)

The Brussels Mixed Deliberative Committees, established through a modification of the Brussels-Capital Region Parliament's internal rules, represent the most institutionally embedded model of citizen-parliamentarian joint deliberation. Each committee comprises 15 parliamentarians and 45 randomly selected citizens who deliberate jointly over five structured, facilitated sessions on topics that have included 5G deployment, homelessness, biodiversity, and citizen participation in crisis management. Joint recommendations are formally received by the relevant standing committee (OECD, 2020; 2023).

The model's distinctive contribution is that citizens and parliamentarians deliberate together, in the same room and on the same terms, creating conditions under which evidence-based reasoning can prevail over partisan positioning. Evaluation data shows improved mutual understanding between citizens and parliamentarians, though specific policy changes traceable to committee recommendations are less well documented in English-language sources. The model is of particular interest for contexts where coalition dynamics can constrain cross-party deliberation within committee rooms: bringing randomly selected citizens into structured dialogue with committee members can create conditions under which climate scrutiny is driven by evidence.

The European cases reviewed in this section provide the institutional design evidence for deliberative parliamentary engagement. The African and Latin American cases reviewed in the following section provide the operational design evidence for contexts of linguistic diversity, structural inequality, and oral communication, conditions that directly inform the options this guide presents.

2.4 Case studies in Africa and Latin America

The evidence base for deliberative climate processes in Africa and Latin America is growing, and it carries genuine design intelligence grounded in local conditions. Every case reviewed below was organised through partnerships between international practitioner networks, among them DemocracyNext, Stanford University's Center for Deliberative Democracy, the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), Delibera Brasil, and Ecocare, and local institutions, drawing on established local deliberative practices including the Bantaba and Kaafo in the Gambia, palaver governance in Mali, and community radio as a participation infrastructure across West Africa.

These are adaptations of internationally developed methodology to specific social, political, and cultural contexts, informed by local deliberative traditions and designed for conditions of linguistic diversity, structural inequality, and oral communication.

The cases were commissioned by a range of institutions: subnational government (Mali, 2006 and 2010), local government (Malawi, 2020), civil society organisations (The Gambia, 2025; Maldives, 2023), and academic research partnerships (Ghana, 2015). None was commissioned by a national parliament or legislature, and none established a formal institutional pathway through which citizen recommendations were received, considered, and responded to by a parliamentary committee. A South African parliament that commissions and institutionalises deliberative climate participation would be establishing a model, not replicating one.

The cases are included for what they demonstrate about process design in conditions directly relevant to the guide's options: multilingual proceedings, accessible communication for participants whose primary communication is oral, active management of power hierarchies, integration of local deliberative practices, and budget-constrained delivery.

Mali Espace Citoyen d'Interpellation Démocratique (2006)

The Espace Citoyen d'Interpellation Démocratique (ECID), convened in January 2006 by the Regional Assembly of Sikasso, Mali's leading cotton-producing region. Funded by UNDP and the International Institution for Environment Development (IDED), is a documented example of deliberative hybridisation: a european citizens' jury format fused with the palaver, a West African deliberative institution whose legitimacy rests on consensus-building, moral authority, and culturally embedded protocols for collective reasoning (Pimbert and Barry, 2021; Lekalake and Buchanan-Clarke, 2026). The hybrid form gave the process the procedural structure of a jury and the institutional authority of the palaver, a combination that shaped both its conduct and its policy outcome (Pimbert and Barry, 2021; Lekalake and Buchanan-Clarke, 2026). The ECID addressed the proposed introduction of genetically modified Bt cotton into Malian agriculture, a question that required forty-five farmer-jurors to weigh competing claims across economic, environmental, social, ethical, and sovereignty dimensions over five days of structured deliberation (Pimbert and Barry, 2021).

The participant selection process began with discussions on selection criteria among key stakeholders across all seven districts of the Sikasso region. From an initial pool of 290 randomly sampled farmers, a steering committee applied additional criteria including gender (minimum thirty per cent women), age diversity, producer scale, and affiliation with producer organisations, yielding a final group of forty-five farmer-jurors. The process achieved thirty per cent female participation through purposive recruitment from women's agricultural associations. A limitation was that no specific method was included to ensure youth participation (Pimbert and Barry, 2021; Lekalake and Buchanan-Clarke, 2026).

The ECID's governance design is directly relevant to the guide's recommendations for stewarding boards in Section 5. Expert witnesses were selected following recommendations from a steering committee comprising public, private, and civil society organisations as well as the President of the Regional Assembly. An oversight panel made up of a respected former minister, a senior civil servant, and civil society members reviewed and validated those choices, so that the process was perceived as balanced across different institutional interests (Pimbert and Barry, 2021). Fourteen regional and international expert witnesses provided structured presentations covering technical, economic, environmental, social, and ethical dimensions of the policy question. The process design explicitly sought to avoid privileging scientific over indigenous knowledge, supporting pluralistic deliberation in which farmers challenged expert assumptions on the basis of their own practical experience (Pimbert and Barry, 2021; Lekalake and Buchanan-Clarke, 2026).

Linguistic accessibility was supported through translation and documentation in French and Bambara, with accommodations to enable participation across different levels of formal education. The facilitation design drew on established palaver governance practices emphasising consensus, harmony, and collective reasoning. Seven local and two international facilitators were selected for their linguistic ability, mediation experience, and local knowledge. Small-group deliberation supported equal participation, particularly among women and lower-status farmers, with facilitators moderating dominant voices and reducing technical barriers (Pimbert and Barry, 2021).

The ECID produced recommendations through consensus, including rejecting Bt cotton pending further evidence, strengthening biosafety regulation, promoting agroecological approaches, protecting seed sovereignty, and introducing GMO labelling (Pimbert and Barry, 2021). Farmer-jurors presented their recommendations to national and regional policymakers in Bamako in July 2006, and the ECID recommendations are assessed as having informed government debates and likely contributed to delays in GMO legislation (Pimbert and Barry, 2021; Lekalake and Buchanan-Clarke, 2026). Government interest led to further citizens' assemblies on agriculture and food security in 2010 (Pimbert, Barry, Berson and Tran-Thanh, 2011).

The ECID's communication strategy provides the strongest African evidence for connecting deliberative processes to the wider public through community radio. All hearings were broadcast live across seven local radio stations in the Sikasso region, giving the process a public visibility that extended well beyond the participants themselves (Pimbert and Barry, 2021; Lekalake and Buchanan-Clarke, 2026). Community radio reaches communities in local languages where oral communication is the primary mode and internet access is limited, a condition that is relevant to the communication challenge facing participatory processes in rural areas across many developing countries. The ECID also demonstrated effective budget optimisation through in-kind support, including the use of a Regional Assembly venue and outreach through existing community radio

networks and local press (Pimbert and Barry, 2021; Lekalake and Buchanan-Clarke, 2026).

The limitations of this case are important to acknowledge. The ECID lacked permanent legal institutionalisation, and no systematic recommendation implementation monitoring was established. The absence of a formal institutional pathway between the deliberative process and the legislative or executive decision-making body meant that policy influence depended on advocacy and political goodwill. Despite the limitations, the initiative prompted a national debate on GMs which catalysed a delay of introducing GM crops to the country (Bryant, 2008). Subsequent political instability in Mali, constrained the institutional environment in which deliberative capacity could be sustained over time (Pimbert and Barry, 2021; Lekalake and Buchanan-Clarke, 2026).

The case confirms the design principle that the institutional connection between deliberation and decision-making is what shapes sustained policy influence, a finding that underpins this guide's insistence on embedding deliberative mechanisms within the parliamentary committee system.

The Gambia North Bank Region Citizens' Assembly (2025)

The North Bank Region Citizens' Assembly on Climate Change in The Gambia (2025), facilitated with DemocracyNext, addressed the question of how communities can restore lands and natural habitats while creating better livelihoods and economic empowerment. The Assembly used door-to-door recruitment at every fourth household in randomly selected villages, with an open-source sortition platform (Panelot) selecting the final participant group of thirty residents (Lekalake and Buchanan-Clarke, 2026).

The Assembly's process design drew deliberately on lessons from earlier African deliberative processes in Mali and Malawi while adapting to the specific political, social, and cultural conditions of the Gambian context (Lekalake and Buchanan-Clarke, 2026). The preparatory phase began six months before the Assembly convened, with a Steering Committee, Executive Committee, and Oversight Panel overseeing community outreach, member selection, expert witness selection, and logistical planning. Ongoing engagement with the Oversight Panel built trust among government and non-government stakeholders, which participants identified as critical to the process's success (Lekalake and Buchanan-Clarke, 2026).

Facilitation was provided by two expert facilitators with extensive experience in the region and familiarity with local social dynamics. Facilitators underwent training including exchanges with organisers from Malawi's Citizens' Juries and a programme with an international deliberative process design specialist (Lekalake and Buchanan-Clarke, 2026). They deliberately avoided expressing their own views, focusing on helping assembly members articulate their own solutions in policy-relevant language.

Trust-building on the first day was identified as critical for enabling meaningful deliberation, particularly given that many assembly members had never engaged in structured political discussion (Lekalake and Buchanan-Clarke, 2026).

Established local deliberative practices informed the facilitation design. The Bantaba (a community governance space for open discussion and collective decision-making) and Kaafo (community-level self-help groups) provided culturally embedded reference points for the deliberative process, with adaptations introduced to balance cultural appropriateness with inclusivity across age and gender (Lekalake and Buchanan-Clarke, 2026). Facilitators actively addressed power hierarchies: gender and status dynamics initially resulted in one male participant dominating discussions, and facilitators intervened to reinforce norms of equal participation and collective deliberation (Lekalake and Buchanan-Clarke, 2026).

The Assembly emphasised participant-driven inquiry by inviting assembly members to scrutinise and refine the central question during deliberations. Members felt sufficiently comfortable to express concerns that the assembly question was too broad and, through collective discussion and multiple rounds of voting, identified and ranked six priority areas, allowing deliberation to focus on concrete themes (Lekalake and Buchanan-Clarke, 2026).

Linguistic accessibility was prioritised. Proceedings were conducted in Fula, Mandinka, and Wolof, and all recommendations were translated and validated in each language (Lekalake and Buchanan-Clarke, 2026). This demonstrates that multilingual deliberation is operationally achievable with proper preparation.

Information provided to assembly members focused on how climate change is affecting the region and on existing policy frameworks. Presenters included representatives from international civil society, ActionAid's national coordinator, and the Deputy Dean of the University of The Gambia's School of Agriculture and Climate Change. Facilitators sought to ensure that recommendations aligned with national development plans and environmental legislation to maximise implementation prospects (Lekalake and Buchanan-Clarke, 2026).

These civil society-led processes make distinctive contributions to deliberative practice within their own contexts. Their direct transferability to the South African legislative sector is shaped by a different institutional starting point: South Africa has established parliamentary structures and legal frameworks through which deliberative methods can be anchored. The processes reviewed here are designed to operate outside formal parliamentary pathways, and public documentation of their design and policy outcomes is still developing as these initiatives mature. The lessons they offer are most usefully drawn at the level of design principle and participant experience, with institutional adaptation for the South African context drawn from sources developed within parliamentary settings.

BOX 2.2

The Gambia North Bank Region Citizens' Assembly: design innovations from a Global South case

The North Bank Region Citizens' Assembly on Climate Change (2025), convened with DemocracyNext, brought thirty randomly selected participants together to consider how communities can restore land and natural habitats while strengthening livelihoods and economic opportunity. Six design choices distinguish it as a reference case for adapting deliberative practice to conditions of linguistic diversity and structural inequality.

Six-month preparatory phase. A Steering Committee, Executive Committee, and Oversight Panel oversaw community outreach, participant selection, expert witness selection, and logistics. Sustained engagement with the Oversight Panel built trust across government and non-government stakeholders, which participants identified as critical to the Assembly's credibility.

Sortition adapted to local conditions. Door-to-door recruitment at every fourth household in randomly selected villages, with final selection through the open-source Panelot sortition platform, produced a randomly assembled group in a setting where postal or digital invitation methods were not viable.

Local deliberative practices inform facilitation design. The Bantaba (a community governance space for open discussion and collective decision-making) and Kaafo (community-level self-help groups) shaped the facilitation method, with targeted adaptations to balance cultural authority with inclusivity across age and gender.

Active facilitation as a design condition. Gender and status dynamics initially produced a pattern in which one male participant dominated discussion. Facilitators intervened to reinforce norms of equal participation and collective deliberation, demonstrating that active facilitation is non-negotiable in contexts of structural inequality.

Participant-driven inquiry. Assembly members scrutinised and refined the central question during the deliberations, identifying and ranking six priority areas through collective discussion and successive rounds of voting.

Multilingual proceedings. The Assembly was conducted in Fula, Mandinka, and Wolof, with all recommendations translated and validated in each language.

Sources: Lekalake and Buchanan-Clarke (2026); DemocracyNext.

Maldives climate assemblies (2023)

Three climate assemblies were convened across the Maldives in 2023, in Addu City, Haa Alif Atoll, and Malé, organised by Ecocare Maldives with support from international deliberative practice networks.

The assemblies addressed climate adaptation and environmental governance, and their recommendations were translated into a National Citizens' Manifesto on Environment and Climate Action. The processes were NGO-initiated with no formal parliamentary connection. Documentation remains limited, and the case is included as evidence of the methodology's application in a small island developing state context, where climate vulnerability is existential and the scale of deliberative engagement is manageable within national governance systems. Pete Bryant was involved as a facilitator trainer (Ecocare Maldives, 2023).

Pará state, Brazil (2024–2025)

The Amazonian climate assemblies in Pará state, Brazil (2024–2025), offer a strong Global South comparator for provincial-level deliberative engagement. Three municipal assemblies in Bujaru, Barcarena, and Cametá addressed climate finance governance in communities affected by extractivism and deforestation, using sortition-based selection adapted to local conditions including recruitment through community cooperatives and traditional authority structures. A parallel advisory group comprising state agencies, municipal departments, research bodies, business representatives, farmers' cooperatives, unions, and traditional authorities validated the process and checked for rigour, balance, and robustness, providing a model of stakeholder oversight that operates alongside the deliberative process and addresses concerns about partisan capture without compromising facilitation independence (International IDEA, 2025; Rey and Latorre, 2026).

The assemblies were connected to state-level preparations for COP30; policy outcomes at state level are as yet undocumented given the recency of the process.

(Re)surgentes intercity climate assemblies (2024)

The (Re)surgentes intercity climate assemblies across Colombia, Mexico, and Argentina (2024), coordinated by a civil society consortium including Delibera Brasil and Extituto Política Abierta, demonstrate the concept of 'deliberative transposition' in practice: civic lottery methods adapted from the UK-based Sortition Foundation's open-source software were applied in conjunction with locally designed deliberative processes.

These assemblies operated without formal government or parliamentary connection, and their policy influence depends on advocacy, which limits their relevance as models for this guide's parliament-centred approach while reinforcing the design principle that the institutional connection between deliberation and decision-making is what shapes the most policy influence.

Ghana's deliberative polls (2015 onwards)

Ghana's deliberative polls, conducted from 2015 by the Center for Deliberative Democracy at Stanford University in partnership with the West Africa Resilience Innovation Lab, provide the African evidence base for two design features relevant to this guide: multi-stakeholder advisory committee governance and the design of accessible learning materials for participants whose primary communication is oral.

The first deliberative poll, conducted in Tamale in January 2015, addressed water, sanitation, hygiene, livelihood, and food security issues. The process was preceded by the establishment of an advisory committee comprising NGOs, academic experts, government officials, a regional development authority, and traditional authority representatives (Chirawurah et al., 2019). This multi-stakeholder governance model ensured that the process was perceived as balanced and legitimate across different institutional interests, and policymakers valued the deliberative poll as a vehicle for citizen voice, making efforts to implement recommendations including dedicating funding to key policy issues identified through the process (Curato, Luis, Ross and Veloso, 2025). The advisory committee model is a design feature the guide recommends for the stewarding boards governing the panel processes in Section 5.

One third of participants in Ghana's deliberative poll communicated primarily through oral modes. Briefing materials accordingly took the form of a video introduction to the policy issues, replacing written documents with visual and oral presentations (Chen, 2021). This design demonstrated that effective deliberation does not depend on written communication, provided the process uses accessible formats from the outset.

Malawi Salima District Citizens' Juries (2020)

The Malawi Salima District Citizens' Juries used a community-based recruitment approach, with membership structured to reflect local demographics across age, gender, geography, and social status (Lekalake and Buchanan-Clarke, 2026). These cases (alongside, Gambia and the Maldives) demonstrate that sortition-based recruitment can be adapted to contexts where comprehensive address databases do not exist, though the resource intensity and the tension between individual selection and collective community voice remain open design challenges (Curato, Luis, Ross and Veloso, 2025).

The Malawi juries provide additional evidence on the distinction between facilitation and teaching in deliberative contexts. The DemocracyNext study of deliberative democracy in Africa identifies this as one of the consistent findings across African cases: facilitators serve a fundamentally different function from teachers, and processes that conflate the two roles undermine participant agency and the quality of deliberation (Lekalake and Buchanan-Clarke, 2026).

The Malawi experience confirmed that facilitators who maintain their role boundary, creating space for participant-led discussion and avoiding the

temptation to educate, produce stronger participant ownership of the recommendations that emerge.

The Malawi juries also demonstrate that community-based recruitment can produce participant groups whose composition is reflective of the affected population without requiring the large-scale infrastructure of national-level sortition processes (Lekalake and Buchanan-Clarke, 2026).

Cape Town Climate Citizens' Assembly (planned, 2026)

A climate citizens' assembly is planned for Cape Town in late 2026, led by the Centre for Research on Democracy (CREDO) at Stellenbosch University in partnership with the University of the Western Cape, the City of Cape Town's Climate Directorate, the Mayor's Climate Commission, and the Western Cape provincial government. The initiative, which emerged from academic research into whether sortition based deliberative forums could function effectively in the South African context, will use sortition to select 60 to 100 participants for a multi-weekend process focused on urban climate governance (DemocracyNext, 2026).

2.5 Cross-cutting findings from the international evidence

The case study evidence yields consistent findings across jurisdictions that shape how this guide presents its options. These findings cluster around three institutional questions.

What links deliberative processes to policy outcomes?

Parliamentary anchoring and focused remit:

The institutional route through which a deliberative process connects to decision-making shapes the durability of its policy influence. Processes embedded within parliamentary systems, where committees hold defined response obligations, provide a route through which recommendations can move into active legislation, as Ireland's Citizens' Assembly demonstrated through the parliamentary committee pathway that fed its climate recommendations into the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021.

Processes commissioned through executive routes can also secure meaningful uptake: independent tracking of the French Convention Citoyenne pour le Climat identifies around 20 per cent of recommendations implemented in their original form and a further 51 per cent in partial or modified form (KNOCA, 2025). The distinction the evidence supports concerns institutional routes that produce defined, documented responses and those in which implementation depends on discretionary engagement.

Focused remits linked to live policy questions can feed directly into active legislation, as in the Irish case. Broader remits serve different purposes, including building public mandates and stimulating national debate, and their value is context-dependent (OECD, 2020; WFD/newDemocracy, 2021).

Defined response pathways and feedback: The international evidence base, gathered across the OECD's deliberative wave studies, the IPU's parliamentary case work, and the practitioner consultations conducted for this guide, identifies the closing of the feedback loop as the institutional challenge no jurisdiction has yet fully resolved. Across the cases reviewed in this guide, deliberative outputs consistently remain agenda-setting in the absence of predefined response protocols, tracking systems, and clear feedback to participants on how their contributions were used. Practitioner evidence from across the comparator parliaments observes that participation processes which generate expectations among contributors and then do not honour them visibly can produce worse democratic outcomes than processes that did not engage citizens at all. This is a documented institutional dynamic, not a design preference: well-designed engagement, precisely because it engages people meaningfully, raises expectations the institution must then meet. Tracking arrangements across the comparator parliaments are typically informal, managed differently by each committee, with acknowledged scope for recommendations to be lost between portfolios. The EAC's evidence cycle, in which contributors can trace how their input influenced the committee's conclusions and the government is required to respond within two months, provides the strongest operational model for closing this gap, and the UK Parliament is developing a wider set of protocols to institutionalise these practices across its participation work (OECD, 2020; 2023; EAC consultation, 26 March 2026; CAUK consultation, 31 March 2026).

Cross-portfolio coordination for cross-cutting issues: Climate governance cuts across portfolio committee boundaries, and single-committee oversight cannot resolve the coordination gap this creates. The Scottish Conveners Group model demonstrates that designating climate as a strategic priority across all committees is achievable within existing institutional frameworks. The EAC model demonstrates that a permanent cross-cutting committee with standing orders authority provides the institutional continuity the coordination model cannot guarantee. Both are required: immediate coordination through existing leadership structures, and medium-term institutional design for permanent cross-portfolio scrutiny (Scottish Parliament consultation, 25 March 2026; EAC consultation, 26 March 2026).

What makes deliberative processes survive and endure?

Cross-party legitimacy and process integrity: credible facilitation, transparent participant selection, and balanced evidence are non-negotiable conditions for credibility. In Scotland, cross-party support sustained the Climate Assembly through a change of government. In the UK, framing the Assembly as serving Parliament's oversight function depoliticised the process.

The EAC's political sustainability was enabled by framing climate as an economic challenge, creating space for a committee that scrutinises all departments without serving any single party's agenda (OECD, 2023; EAC consultation, 26 March 2026).

Institutionalisation and sustainable resourcing: Durability depends on embedding deliberation within formal parliamentary procedures that survive electoral cycles, supported by integrated stakeholder databases and tracking systems. The Brussels Mixed Deliberative Committees are embedded in parliamentary rules. The EAC's standing orders foundation requires a deliberate parliamentary decision to revoke. Reliance on ad hoc or external funding weakens durability across the international evidence base: processes that depend on philanthropic support, time-limited research budgets, or one-off funding convergences face structural limits on the institutional ownership a parliament can build around them (OECD, 2023).

The graded options presented in this guide begin with administrative actions that insulate the process from political interference to a certain degree, while working within Parliament's own framework and model.

What makes deliberative processes inclusive and legitimate?

Participant selection designed for context: Sortition can enhance legitimacy where comprehensive population registers and sampling infrastructure exist. Where these conditions do not obtain, managed recruitment that produces participant groups reflective of the affected population offers a feasible alternative. Scotland uses polling organisation recruitment; the Gambia used community-based selection informed by local governance structures; Malawi structured membership to reflect local demographics. The tension between statistical representativeness and practical feasibility recurs across every jurisdiction in the evidence base (OECD, 2020; Lekalake and Buchanan-Clarke, 2026).

Trust-building, preparatory engagement, and facilitation of power dynamics: Significant preparatory engagement is required where participants are unfamiliar with structured political discussion. The Gambian assembly and the Mali ECID both invested substantial time in community engagement before deliberations began. Facilitation must actively manage inequalities of gender, age, education, and social status; passive facilitation in contexts of structural inequality reproduces that inequality within the deliberative space. The boundary between facilitation and teaching is a knowledge co-creation design condition: processes in which facilitators don't take on the role of teacher produce stronger participant agency (Lekalake and Buchanan-Clarke, 2026; Pimbert and Barry, 2021).

Multilingual deliberation, accessible communication, and local deliberative practices: Multilingual processes are operationally achievable with appropriate preparation. The Gambia conducted proceedings in three languages with outputs validated in each. Ghana found one third of participants communicated primarily through oral modes, requiring video briefing materials. Linguistic and literacy diversity are design parameters, not barriers. Local deliberative traditions, the Bantaba and Kaafo in the Gambia, community radio in Mali, can inform process design to increase cultural legitimacy and participant comfort (Lekalake and Buchanan-Clarke, 2026; Pimbert and Barry, 2021; Chen, 2021).

Section 3: Climate governance and deliberation in South Africa

3.1 Introduction

The international evidence reviewed in Section 2 demonstrates what deliberative citizen participation in climate governance can achieve. This section turns to the specific governance framework, institutional conditions, and democratic culture within which South Africa's Parliament operates, and which any adaptation of that international evidence must address.

South Africa's climate governance obligations are layered. International treaties and continental and regional commitments create mandates that flow to national and provincial legislatures. These obligations were politically reaffirmed in the Joint Statement adopted by the G20 parliaments at the 11th P20 Speakers' Summit, hosted by the Parliament of the Republic of South Africa in Cape Town and Kleinmond from 1 to 3 October 2025 (P20, 2025), and given a functional framework for parliamentary action in the African preparatory paper Mobilising African Parliaments to Act on Climate Change (Ginindza, 2025). The Constitution, the Climate Change Act 22 of 2024, and the Just Transition Framework establish the national statutory and policy framework.

The South African legislative sector's Public Participation Framework (2013) and Parliament's own Public Participation Model (2015) provide the evaluative standard against which current participation practice is assessed. South Africa's legislatures have implemented the Framework and Model across the four levels of the participation spectrum, and the situational analysis in Section 4 finds that implementation of Level 4 (Collaborate) has been inconsistent across policy areas and institutions, with different operational understandings of what a Level 4 commitment entails in practice.

The section closes by identifying eleven conditions specific to South Africa that shape the design environment for deliberative innovation, and the assessment criteria derived from them. Table 3.3 consolidates the governance requirements against which the situational analysis in Section 4 measures the 7th Parliament's performance.

3.2 International climate governance

International climate governance is structured around the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) system and the Paris Agreement, supported by non-binding conventions that carry interpretive weight in the South African constitutional context. Together these instruments establish the principles, institutions, and accountability mechanisms guiding national climate policy, and they hold clear mandates for governments and, by implication, for parliaments to facilitate deeper deliberation within their oversight mandates.

3.2.1 Binding international instruments

The UNFCCC is the foundational global treaty governing international climate action. The convention creates a governance framework in which countries cooperate through national reporting, international negotiations, and periodic conferences of the parties (COPs). It also introduces the principle of ‘common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities’, recognising that countries have different responsibilities and capacities in addressing climate change. South Africa ratified the treaty in 1997, legally binding the country to report on national greenhouse gas emissions, develop and implement climate policies, and cooperate internationally on climate change mitigation and adaptation.

The Paris Agreement provides the current global framework for climate governance. It commits countries to limit global temperature rise to well below 2°C and to pursue efforts to limit it to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. The agreement requires countries to prepare and update Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), establish long-term low-emissions strategies, and implement adaptation measures. NDCs are national climate action plans that each country must prepare, communicate, and periodically update, outlining the targets, policies, and measures they will implement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to climate change, while progressively increasing their ambition over time. The Paris Agreement also creates mechanisms for transparency, global stocktaking, and climate finance. South Africa ratified the Paris Agreement in 2016, which means it must submit and update the country’s NDCs, report on emissions and progress, and participate in transparency and review mechanisms. The NDCs themselves are not legally enforceable; countries design their own commitments. The reporting, updating, and transparency requirements, however, are legally binding.

3.2.2 Non-binding conventions

Non-binding international agreements carry interpretive weight in the South African constitutional context. Section 39 of the Constitution requires courts, forums, and tribunals to consider international law when interpreting the rights in the Bill of Rights, including the right to an environment that is not harmful to health or well-being. Non-binding instruments therefore inform the standard against which Parliament’s facilitation of public involvement in environmental and climate governance is assessed.

The Aarhus Convention focuses on environmental democracy and was adopted by the UN Economic Commission for Europe. It establishes rights for citizens to access environmental information, participate in environmental decision-making, and access justice in environmental matters. It is widely cited as a model for linking public participation and climate governance and is often used as an evaluative benchmark for environmental democracy.

The United Nations Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015) emphasises people-centred approaches to mitigating and addressing disaster impacts.

Adopted at the Third UN Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, it runs until 2030. South Africa has a political commitment to implement its provisions. The Framework's emphasis on participatory approaches, from crowdsourcing to citizen science, reinforces the expectation that affected communities will be enabled to contribute to disaster preparedness and recovery planning (Willis, 2022). In a country where climate-related disasters, including floods, droughts, and wildfires, are increasing in frequency and severity, the Sendai Framework's participatory principles connect directly to the parliamentary oversight obligations established by South Africa's Climate Change Act and the Disaster Management Act (2002).

3.3 African and regional climate governance

At the continental and regional level, several instruments create political commitments that reinforce expectations on national legislatures to promote policy coherence, oversee climate governance implementation, and facilitate participatory governance. The most significant for parliamentary oversight purposes are the following.

The African Union Climate Change and Resilient Development Strategy and Action Plan, formally adopted in 2022, is aligned with the AU Green Recovery Action Plan and Agenda 2063 and positions climate action at the core of sustainable economic transformation, peace, and human security. It is framed as Africa's 'common climate response' to guide negotiations, partnerships, and investment over the period of 2022–2032. It creates a political commitment to align policies and legislative frameworks with the Action Plan.

The SADC Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (2015) provides a regional framework for climate adaptation, mitigation, and disaster risk management and promotes cooperation between member states in climate policy development, data sharing, and resilience planning.

The Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP) emphasises the need to strengthen agriculture for food systems and livelihoods, a sector that is highly vulnerable to climate change. Progress toward the targets set has been uneven across the continent, with the P20 identifying parliamentary oversight capacity, policy coherence, and sustained political commitment as common challenges (Ginindza, 2025).

The Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA) promotes large-scale, climate-resilient infrastructure development across the continent. Its relevance for parliamentary oversight lies in the scrutiny of whether national infrastructure programmes, including those funded through the JET-IP, align with continental resilience standards.

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) agreement aims to create a single continental market for goods and services, with implementation aligned to climate goals including accelerated transition to renewable energy. For parliamentary oversight, the AfCFTA's climate dimensions implicate the Portfolio Committee on Trade, Industry and Competition, particularly in relation to the

European Union’s Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism and its potential impact on South African exports.

3.4 P20 parliamentary commitments and the framework for parliamentary action

The Parliament of the Republic of South Africa hosted the 11th G20 Parliamentary Speakers’ Summit (P20) in Cape Town and Kleinmond from 1 to 3 October 2025, the first time the P20 has met on African soil. Speakers and Presiding Officers from the G20 parliaments adopted a 58-point Joint Statement under the theme Harnessing Parliamentary Diplomacy for the Realisation of Global Solidarity, Equality and Sustainability (P20, 2025). The Joint Statement was signed by the Speaker of the National Assembly and the Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces in their capacity as hosts, giving its commitments national institutional weight that extends beyond their P20 origin.

The framework for that work is set out in the Parliament’s African preparatory paper Mobilising African Parliaments to Act on Climate Change (Ginindza, 2025), prepared for the P20 Symposium of African Speakers of Parliament held at the Pan-African Parliament in Midrand on 28 July 2025. The paper organises parliamentary work on climate into five functional clusters that this guide applies as an evaluative framework in the situational analysis of the 7th Parliament and that shape the assessment criteria developed in the closing subsection of this section.

Table 3.1: Parliamentary action clusters for climate governance

Cluster	What parliaments are required to do
Legislation and oversight	Establish cross-party mechanisms for climate governance that promote cooperation and long-term policy continuity, align national legislation with international commitments, and exercise sustained oversight of executive climate action across portfolio boundaries.
Capacity building	Strengthen the climate literacy of parliamentarians through training, expert engagement, and structured knowledge exchange with civil society and academic institutions, enabling members to engage with climate science, policy implications, and the socio-economic dimensions of transition.

Budget and finance	Scrutinise climate-related budget allocations, advance public-private partnerships for climate finance mobilisation, integrate climate considerations across government programmes and sectors, and track climate-related funding and expenditure through transparent monitoring systems.
Accountability	Monitor how governments coordinate, manage, and track climate finance and its impacts across national and sub-national institutions, require regular government reporting on progress toward climate commitments, and use parliamentary diplomacy to advocate for governments to honour their obligations.
Institutional sustainability	Integrate sustainability into parliamentary operations, including measuring and reducing the carbon footprint of parliamentary activities, adopting green procurement practices, and conducting annual sustainability audits.

Source: Adapted from Ginindza (2025), Section 4.

The combination is institutionally coherent. The Joint Statement establishes the substantive commitments that South Africa's Parliament has helped shape, and the cluster framework establishes the functional terms in which those commitments translate into the work of Portfolio Committees, Select Committees, and provincial legislatures. The situational analysis that follows draws on both: the Joint Statement's thematic areas to identify where climate work needs to land, and the five clusters to assess the current performance of the 7th Parliament against each function.

3.5 South African climate governance framework

3.5.1 The Constitution

South Africa's climate governance framework is rooted in the Constitution. Section 24 guarantees the right to an environment that is not harmful to health or well-being and to have it protected for present and future generations.

It requires reasonable legislative measures to prevent pollution, promote conservation, and secure sustainable development while promoting justifiable economic and social growth.

The Constitution further contains a range of socio-economic and cultural rights that have to be progressively realised using the maximum of available resources; retrogression in realisation of existing access must be avoided at all costs. This includes access to adequate housing, adequate health care, food, water, social security, and education (Sections 26, 27, 29). Children's socio-economic and cultural rights are more limited in scope but are not subject to progressive realisation or resource availability, meaning that they create more immediate obligations. These include the rights to basic nutrition, shelter, basic health care, and social services. The right to equality and non-discrimination is relevant here because the people most impacted by and vulnerable to climate change tend to be those groups who also suffered discrimination under apartheid. Affirmative action to address these inequalities is envisaged under the Bill of Rights and must inform the understanding of the right to a healthy environment, requiring the needs of the most vulnerable to be actively addressed (Bilchitz, 2017; Coggin, 2021; Kidd, 2023).

South Africa's Constitution and legislative framework requires Parliament to facilitate meaningful public involvement in legislative and oversight processes, including through hearings, consultations, and stakeholder engagement. The Constitution establishes public participation as a cross-cutting obligation that applies to both the executive and legislative spheres, with distinct roles for each.

Section 195(1)(e) requires public administration to encourage public participation in policymaking, meaning national and provincial governments must design inclusive policy processes, provide accessible information, and engage affected stakeholders when developing and implementing laws and policies. At the local level, this obligation is more explicit: Section 152(1)(e) requires municipalities to actively encourage the involvement of communities and community organisations in local governance, including service delivery and development planning. Together, these provisions require the government to embed participation throughout the policy cycle, from planning to implementation, ensuring responsiveness to public needs.

Sections 59(1)(a), 72(1)(a), and 118(1)(a) place a direct constitutional duty on the National Assembly, the National Council of Provinces, and provincial legislatures to facilitate public involvement in their legislative and oversight processes. This requires legislatures to create structured, accessible opportunities for public input, such as committee hearings, submissions, and consultations, when considering bills and exercising oversight. As affirmed in *Doctors for Life International v Speaker of the National Assembly* (2006), these processes must be reasonable and meaningful, ensuring the public has a genuine opportunity to influence legislative outcomes and that participation is not reduced to a procedural formality.

3.5.2 National legislative and policy framework

South Africa has developed a relatively advanced climate governance framework that includes the National Environmental Management Act (1998), the National Air Quality Act (2004), the Biodiversity Act (2004), and the Disaster Management Act (2002). The Carbon Tax Act (2019) institutionalises South Africa's Nationally Determined Contributions obligations. The Climate Change Act of 2024 creates the overall governance framework for the legislative approach.

Key national policies include the National Climate Change Response Strategy (2004), the National Water Resource Strategy (2004), the National Adaptation Strategy (2007), the National Climate Change Response White Paper (2011), the Green Economy Accord (2011), the Just Energy Transition Investment Plan (2022), and the Just Transition Framework (2022), which defines the social and economic goals of and sets out the governance structures required for the transition. Planning and governance instruments include the National Development Plan 2030, which integrates climate resilience and low-carbon development into national economic planning, and the Socio-Economic Impact Assessment System, which requires climate and environmental considerations when developing new policies or legislation (Averchenkova, 2019). Energy and mitigation sector policies include the Renewable Energy Independent Power Producer Procurement Programme (REIPPPP) and the Energy Action Plan (2022).

The executive governance environment within which parliamentary climate oversight operates is shaped by several structural constraints documented in the broader literature. Policy alignment between climate targets and energy planning instruments has been uneven, creating implementation delays that fall within parliamentary oversight jurisdiction.

Departmental implementation capacity varies considerably, with provincial and municipal tiers carrying substantial delivery obligations under the Climate Change Act while facing the most acute resource and capacity limitations. Climate finance mobilisation, emissions data availability, and the quality of consultation between government, organised labour, business, and civil society all affect the policy environment that Parliament is constitutionally mandated to oversee (Fumba, 2022). These executive-branch constraints do not diminish the parliamentary oversight obligation; they define the institutional terrain across which that obligation must be exercised.

3.5.3 Climate Change Act and the Just Transition Framework

The following analysis focuses on the Climate Change Act, 2024 and the Just Transition Framework, 2022, which establish a justice-oriented, participatory, and multi-level governance system for climate action in South Africa. Together they provide a clear and contemporary basis for understanding Parliament's role in climate governance in South Africa.

The Climate Change Act establishes the statutory framework for national climate governance, including sectoral emission targets, adaptation planning, and coordinated action across spheres of government, thereby incorporating some of the international law requirements and creating a legislative basis for parliamentary oversight, law-making, and budget scrutiny. This is informed by the Just Transition Framework, which sets out the socio-economic governance principles guiding the transition to a low-carbon, climate-resilient economy, with a focus on protecting vulnerable groups through inclusive, equitable, and participatory decision-making.

Together, these instruments establish a coordinated and cooperative governance framework that aligns policies, plans, and institutional arrangements across sectors and spheres of government, while embedding climate considerations into development planning and implementation (CCA, 2024; PCC, 2022). In doing so, they provide both the legal mandate and policy rationale for integrating climate considerations across parliamentary processes, enabling Parliament to assess climate implications in sectoral legislation, monitor executive implementation, and ensure alignment with broader development and social justice objectives.

Justice, participation, and stakeholder engagement

The Just Transition Framework builds on principles in the National Environmental Management Act (Act 107 of 1998), embedding distributive, restorative, and procedural justice, including equitable access to resources and meaningful participation in decision-making (PCC, 2022).

Procedural justice requires inclusive, participatory processes that enable communities, workers, and civil society to engage in and shape just transition policies. This includes strengthening the capacity of unions, civic organisations, and advocacy groups, and supporting locally driven transition initiatives (PCC, 2022).

Informed by this mandate, the Climate Change Act embeds public participation as a cross-cutting requirement by mandating that, before exercising key powers (Sections 17, 19–26, 28, and 30), the relevant authority must follow a transparent, consultative process that affords the public and affected stakeholders a reasonable opportunity to comment on proposed climate governance instruments.

These sections collectively cover the development of sectoral emission targets, carbon budgets, adaptation strategies and plans, and related regulatory measures, thereby requiring that such instruments be subjected to public notice and inclusive consultation prior to finalisation. Section 32 of the Act requires the government to invite written representations within a defined timeframe and provide sufficient information for meaningful engagement, consider oral submissions where appropriate, and take all inputs into account before exercising the relevant powers, thereby reinforcing principles of inclusivity, transparency, and accountable decision-making. This establishes a consistent procedural obligation on government across all spheres to engage organised labour, business, civil society, communities, and other affected parties, ensuring that climate decision-making is

informed by diverse inputs, responsive to socio-economic impacts, and aligned with principles of openness, accountability, and participatory governance.

Institutional coordination and planning across government

National government is responsible for setting policy direction, objectives, timelines, and implementation responsibilities; coordinating across sectors and spheres; mobilising financial and institutional resources; integrating just transition priorities into national budgeting; enforcing regulatory frameworks (mining, energy, environmental rehabilitation); and supporting provinces and municipalities. It is also viewed as the most trusted locus for leading the just transition and building social compacts (Roberts, 2024). The CCA establishes a structured planning system, including a National Adaptation Strategy intended to guide coordinated adaptation, mitigation, and resilience-building across all spheres (CCA, Chapter 4).

The CCA further requires all organs of state to align policies and programmes with its objectives and establishes national coordination mechanisms, including the Presidential Climate Commission (PCC), which reports to the National Assembly (CCA, Chapter 2).

Provinces and municipalities must translate national priorities into regional and local plans through climate change needs assessments and response plans which must integrate climate into existing planning documents such as IDPs, and coordinate implementation and stakeholder engagement at local level. Intergovernmental forums (provincial and municipal) function as climate coordination platforms and report upward within the governance system (CCA, Chapter 3; PCC, 2022: 21). The Just Transition Framework complements this by promoting locally driven transition projects, economic diversification, and employment programmes that mitigate socio-economic impacts while advancing a green economy (PCC, 2022).

Climate finance, regulation, and oversight

Both frameworks identify the need to integrate climate priorities into budgeting and financial systems. The Climate Change Act introduces an emerging regulatory framework, including carbon budgets and mitigation plans, requiring sustained parliamentary oversight (CCA, 2024).

The Presidential Climate Commission and accountability

The Presidential Climate Commission (PCC), established under the Climate Change Act, 2024 as an independent juristic person, was reconstituted on 2 January 2026 under Section 10(4)(a) of the Act, with twenty-five commissioners appointed by the President for the 2026 to 2030 tenure following the public nomination process initiated in August 2025 (The Presidency, 2026). The Commission serves as a central advisory and coordinating body on South Africa's climate response and just transition.

Guided by the Just Transition Framework, its role is to provide evidence-based advice on mitigation, adaptation, and the socio-economic dimensions of the transition, facilitate social dialogue among government, business, labour, and civil society, and support alignment across policies and institutions. The Commission may also establish expert committees to strengthen technical inputs, and it reports directly to Parliament, thereby positioning it as a key interface between stakeholders and the state while strengthening accountability and informing parliamentary oversight of climate governance. Regulations operationalising the Commission's status as a Schedule 3A public entity under the Public Finance Management Act were published for public comment in December 2025; the listing is not yet in force.

Taken together, the international, regional, and national frameworks set out in Sections 3.2 to 3.5 position national and provincial legislatures at the centre of a multi-level, cross-sectoral climate governance system, responsible for law-making, policy coherence, executive oversight, climate finance accountability, and facilitating meaningful public participation across the full climate policy cycle. The P20 obligation clusters Parliament identified translate these layered commitments into five concrete areas of parliamentary responsibility against which the situational analysis measures the 7th Parliament's performance.

The constitutional, legislative, and institutional provisions established in this section define both the mandate and the institutional conditions for deepening deliberative engagement. The Constitution's public participation obligations (Sections 59, 72, and 118), the Climate Change Act's cross-cutting governance requirements, the Just Transition Framework's emphasis on procedural justice, and the Commission's reporting relationship with the National Assembly together establish the framework within which any strengthening of parliamentary climate participation must operate. Section 3.6 turns to Parliament's own participation framework and model, which provide the evaluative standard against which current practice and proposed enhancements are assessed.

3.6 Parliament's public participation framework and climate change

3.6.1 The Public Participation Framework

The four-level participation ladder

The Public Participation Framework, adopted by the Speakers' Forum in 2013, establishes a four-level participation ladder for the South African legislative sector, adapted from Arnstein's (1969) ladder of participation and calibrated to the institutional context of the legislative sector.

Table 3.2: The PPF four-level participation ladder

Level	Description	South African mechanisms	Climate governance application
Level 1: Inform	The public is provided with balanced and objective information to assist their understanding of problems, alternatives, and solutions	Parliamentary broadcasts in 12 official languages, website publications, committee reports	Climate information disseminated through existing channels; limited climate-specific content
Level 2: Consult	The public is invited to provide feedback, input, or comment on analyses, alternatives, and decisions	Public hearings, written submissions, petitions	Climate Change Bill public hearings (27 hearings, all nine provinces); written submissions on climate legislation
Level 3: Involve	The public is provided with opportunity for dialogue and interaction throughout the process, with the understanding that the legislature remains the decision-maker	People's Assembly, Taking Parliament to the People, sector parliaments, constituency offices	Climate and just transition issues raised at community level through TPTTP; no climate-themed People's Assembly or sector parliament identified
Level 4: Collaborate	The public is provided with opportunities to partner or work jointly with decision-makers in the identification of preferred solutions, while the legislature retains ultimate decision-making authority	No consistently applied mechanism; standards of application are not yet fully defined across the sector	Adopted in 2013; not yet consistently applied in climate governance

The PPF acknowledges that Level 4 represents an aspiration that may not be immediately achievable, stating that Level 3 (Involve) would be the most probable level at the current stage of democratic and participatory development. This acknowledgement, made in 2013, was a realistic assessment of institutional readiness. Twelve years later, the question is whether the institutional conditions have developed sufficiently for Level 4 to be activated, and whether climate governance, with the features documented in the international evidence, provides a compelling entry point for that activation.

The Public Participation Model

Parliament adopted its Public Participation Model in 2015, drawing on the Public Participation Framework, with a more operational and less aspirational interpretation of participation. Where Level 4 in the Framework represents the highest form of engagement, collaborative, iterative, and deliberative processes where the public works with Parliament to shape outcomes, the Model places emphasis on response and feedback loops, ensuring that the public is informed of how their inputs were considered. In this sense, Level 4 in the Model focuses more on closing the loop than on co-creation. The distinction therefore lies between depth and ambition (Framework Level 4 as shared influence and deliberation) and practical implementation (the Model as a set of tools and processes, with Level 4 centred on responsiveness). Together, the Framework and the Model identify both the existing institutional practice of participation in Parliament and the distance to more meaningful, deliberative engagement.

Parliament's own ongoing work on improving public involvement, including the Public Participation Improvement Plan and the initiatives currently underway in the current financial year, signals institutional recognition that participation practice is a continuing institutional priority.

Parliament's regular public participation practices include a range of structured and outreach-based mechanisms, many of which have been applied to climate governance in certain instances. These include public hearings on the Climate Change Bill conducted by portfolio and select committees, written submissions from civil society, academia, and industry on climate policy and legislation, and petitions raising environmental and service delivery concerns linked to climate impacts.

In addition, Parliament runs outreach initiatives such as Taking Parliament to the People, where climate and just transition issues are often raised at community level, as well as committee oversight visits to areas affected by climate-related disasters such as floods or droughts, incorporating community input.

Climate-specific engagements have also included thematic stakeholder roundtables and webinars, such as discussions on climate change and reproductive health, which bring together experts and affected groups to inform parliamentary deliberations.

More recently, digital platforms, social media, and livestreamed proceedings have expanded access to climate discussions, while targeted engagements with civil society and vulnerable communities are used to gather more focused inputs.

Together, these mechanisms reflect a system that is well developed at consultation and involvement levels and less consistently geared toward sustained, deliberative participation.

3.6.2 The 6th Parliament and the Climate Change Act

The 5th Parliament (2014–2019) saw the passage of the Carbon Tax Act (2019), and parliamentary climate oversight remained concentrated in the Portfolio Committee on Environmental Affairs, with no cross-cutting coordination mechanism.

The 6th Parliament (2019–2024) represented a substantial institutional advance. It processed and passed the Climate Change Bill through a Section 76 process that included 27 in-person public hearings across all nine provinces, creating the most comprehensive statutory framework for climate governance in South Africa's legislative history. It then established, by National Assembly resolution in June 2022, a Joint Steering Committee on Climate Change. This was the first and only cross-cutting parliamentary mechanism dedicated to climate governance coordination, convening parliamentarians from multiple portfolio areas to address the cross-portfolio character of climate governance. Parliament's own Research Unit identified the integration of oversight across committees as an action needed for effective climate response, and the 6th Parliament Legacy Report documented the Joint Steering Committee as an institutional innovation.

Two implications of this trajectory shape the analysis that follows. The 6th Parliament demonstrated both the capacity and the institutional will to treat climate governance as a cross-cutting challenge requiring coordination beyond portfolio committee boundaries. The Joint Steering Committee on Climate Change lapsed at the end of the 6th Parliament, as joint committees do at the close of a parliamentary term, and the 7th Parliament has not yet had occasion to re-establish it. Its re-establishment is one of the recommendations the guide develops in Section 5, building on the institutional precedent the 6th Parliament set.

The Climate Change Act creates a statutory governance framework that did not exist during any previous parliamentary term, including Provincial and Municipal Forums on Climate Change, provincial and municipal climate needs assessment and response planning, Presidential Climate Commission reporting to Parliament, carbon budgets, and sectoral emissions targets. The 7th Parliament is therefore the first parliament that must exercise its oversight and participation functions within a fully articulated statutory climate governance framework, and Section 4 assesses the extent to which it is doing so.

3.6.3 The CCA public participation process: evidence of system capacity

The public participation process conducted during the passage of the Climate Change Bill through Parliament provides a strong piece of evidence that South Africa's existing participation infrastructure can deliver substantive, multi-provincial citizen engagement on climate governance when the institutional will and resources are mobilised.

Box 3.1: The Climate Change Bill public participation process: key facts

Section 76 Bill requiring consideration by both houses with provincial mandates.

27 in-person public hearings across all nine provinces.

Particularly high participation in KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo.

KwaZulu-Natal was one of only three provinces to propose substantive amendments, including provisions for gender-specific vulnerability mapping.

Communities, civil society, and sectoral stakeholders raised concerns spanning climate impacts, environmental justice, economic transition, and energy policy.

The process met and, in several respects, exceeded the Doctors for Life (2006) standard.

The Section 76 process

The Climate Change Bill was processed as a Section 76 Bill, requiring consideration by both the National Assembly and the National Council of Provinces with provincial mandates, triggering participation obligations at national and provincial levels. Parliament conducted 27 in-person public hearings across all nine provinces, alongside written submissions, virtual engagement, and targeted stakeholder outreach. The process drew significant public interest, with particularly high participation in KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo. Communities, civil society, and sectoral stakeholders raised concerns spanning climate impacts, environmental justice, economic transition, and energy policy.

Public input influenced aspects of the Bill: KwaZulu-Natal was one of only three provinces to propose substantive amendments during the mandate process, including provisions for gender-specific vulnerability mapping.

The hearings demonstrated the strength of the existing participation infrastructure when applied to climate governance. Provincial committees mobilised their established hearing processes, outreach networks, and language services. Sector-specific stakeholders, labour organisations, community-based groups, and individual citizens participated through a range of channels. The process met and, in several respects, exceeded the constitutional obligation to facilitate public involvement as articulated in Doctors for Life (2006).

Limitations as measured against deeper engagement

The process also exposed the constraints of the existing approach when measured against the deeper engagement that sustained climate governance requires. The Parliamentary Monitoring Group's case study of the Bill process concluded that the engagement was largely consultative in character, with limited opportunities for sustained dialogue or co-creation.

The hearings followed the standard format: presentations by invited stakeholders, oral submissions from the public, and written submissions received through the committee secretariat. Participants were heard, and their inputs were recorded, and the process did not create structured opportunities for citizens to engage with each other's evidence, weigh competing trade-offs, or develop collective recommendations through facilitated deliberation.

The Feedback stage of the Public Participation Model's participation cycle, in which Parliament communicates how public input was considered and what influence it had on the final legislation, received limited institutional attention.

Implications for the guide

The Climate Change Bill participation process demonstrates that the institutional capacity for multi-provincial, multi-stakeholder climate engagement exists within Parliament's current institutional framework.

The question the guide addresses in Section 5 is how to deepen the quality of that engagement, moving from single-event consultation toward the sustained, iterative, and collaborative forms of participation that the Public Participation Framework's Level 4 envisages and that the Climate Change Act's ongoing governance obligations require.

3.7 South African conditions and best-fit assessment criteria

The Public Participation Framework's 'best-fit' epistemology establishes the evaluative framework through which this guide assesses the applicability of international deliberative innovations to the South African parliamentary context. This subsection articulates the specific conditions in South Africa that any climate deliberative mechanism must address and develops the assessment criteria through which each option in Section 5 is evaluated.

The conditions are both general, reflecting South Africa's linguistic, geographic, and socio-economic conditions, and climate-specific, reflecting the Climate Change Act's institutional provisions, the Just Transition governance challenge, the cross-cutting character of climate across portfolio mandates, and provincial differentiation in climate vulnerability.

Conditions and assessment criteria

Multilingual participation

South Africa has 12 official languages, and the Constitution (Section 6) requires provision for multilingual participation. The Doctors for Life standard requires that participation be reasonable and effective, which means deliberation must occur in languages that participants actually speak, with provision for real-time translation where engagements operate at a national level (Venter, 2023). Any proposed mechanism is assessed on whether it provides for real-time multilingual engagement across official languages.

Triple crisis of poverty, inequality, and unemployment

Deliberation must adhere to procedural justice, creating platforms that enable meaningful collaboration across power dynamics, including labour, business, civil society, and affected communities (PCC, 2022; Venter, 2023). Deliberation around climate change has to frontload impacts and interact with initiatives designed to address poverty alleviation, protect vulnerable groups, and support economic diversification. Each option is assessed on whether it enables social compact-building across existing interest groups and addresses these power dynamics.

Unequal capacity to engage with technical information

High levels of inequality affect education, access to information, and the ability to engage with science-based evidence. Public opinion research indicates that only a small percentage of South Africans identify climate change as a priority national concern (Climate Change and Parliament, 2022). Each option is assessed on whether it creates opportunities for participants to connect climate change to the development challenges they experience directly, accommodating the reality that climate may not be perceived as an immediate priority.

Geographic dispersal and the municipal burden

Nine provinces have vastly different climate vulnerabilities, economic profiles, and institutional capacity. The Climate Change Act and the Just Transition Framework place significant implementation responsibilities on municipalities, many of which lack the human and financial resources to fulfil them. Strong documented mistrust of top-down policy processes creates a demand for localised, face-to-face engagement connected to provincial and municipal governance structures (European Union and Presidential Climate Commission, 2024; Venter, 2023; PCC, 2022). Each option is assessed on whether it allows for localised engagement aligned with municipal and provincial governance processes, reaching the climate-affected and coal-dependent communities whose participation is most critical.

Deep inequality determines who can participate, for how long, and at what cost

Coal-dependent and climate-vulnerable communities face the highest barriers: transport costs, time away from income-generating activity, caring responsibilities,

and limited access to communication infrastructure (Makgetla, 2021; Venter, 2023). Each option is assessed on whether it frontloads the conditions that enable participation of the most vulnerable.

Political culture of organised representation

South Africa's democratic culture operates through party structures, trade unions, civic organisations, and community-based movements. The Just Transition Framework emphasises social compact-building through constituency-based engagement and structured stakeholder representation. Deliberative mechanisms designed around individualised citizen selection must reckon with this political culture, which understands democratic agency as exercised through collective formations (PCC, 2022). Each option is assessed on whether it is built on this political culture.

Existing institutional instruments and Climate Change Act provisions

The Public Participation Framework, the Public Participation Model, sector parliaments, Taking Parliament to the People, public hearings, and constituency offices carry constitutional legitimacy and institutional familiarity. The Climate Change Act creates new institutional sites to which deliberative engagement can connect: Provincial and Municipal Forums on Climate Change (Section 8), municipal planning obligations, and Presidential Climate Commission reporting requirements.

Both the Just Transition Framework and the Climate Change Act emphasise that governance innovations should be embedded within existing institutional arrangements. Each option is assessed on whether it strengthens existing governance systems and connects to defined parliamentary processes with a clear institutional pathway for uptake.

Cross-cutting character of climate governance

Climate governance cuts across portfolio committee mandates, and the documented coordination gap between committees requires mechanisms that the current committee system does not provide. Each option is assessed on whether it addresses this cross-cutting character.

Parliamentary capacity constraints

Staffing, research support, climate-specific expertise, translation services, and budgetary limitations determine what is operationally feasible in any given parliamentary term. Each option is assessed on feasibility within these constraints.

The Constitutional standard

The Constitutional Court requires reasonable steps to afford the public reasonable opportunity to participate effectively, assessed case by case. This includes adequate and timely notice of hearings and processes; accessible venues and formats including geographic reach and language accessibility; relevant information in understandable form; sufficient time for preparation and

submissions; and flexible, context-sensitive methods to reach affected communities (Doctors for Life, 2006, paras 129 to 172). Each option is assessed against this standard, calibrated to the nature and importance of climate governance.

Hybrid participation as a best practice

Hybrid models combining face-to-face, broadcast, and online engagement are important given inequality, access constraints, and diverse communication needs. The Northern Cape Provincial Legislature’s memoranda of understanding with community radio stations, combining broadcast of sittings with call-in and social media participation, illustrate how existing provincial practice can extend reach without requiring new institutional infrastructure. Each option is assessed on whether it employs hybrid communication methods designed to bridge the digital divide.

Every option in Section 5 is assessed against these eleven conditions. The best-fit scoring consolidates them into four composite assessment dimensions for summary comparison: institutional integration, inclusion and access, democratic culture alignment, and climate governance fit. The conditions are also designed to be used by Parliament itself as a decision-making tool when evaluating the feasibility and appropriateness of deliberative mechanisms beyond those this guide recommends.

Table 3.3: What South Africa’s governance framework requires

This table consolidates the governance requirements established in Sections 3.2 to 3.7. It provides the benchmark against which Section 4 measures the 7th Parliament’s practice.

Governance provision	Source	What is required
Climate integration across government	CCA Sections 7, 15, 32	All departments integrate climate into planning, budgeting, and reporting; Parliament oversees compliance.
Provincial and Municipal Forums on Climate Change based on existing participation and planning platforms	CCA Section 8	Premier’s forums coordinate provincial climate response; municipal intergovernmental forums coordinate local climate needs assessment and response plans across the country.
Sectoral emissions targets and carbon budgets	CCA Sections 17, 19–26	Parliamentary oversight of target development, carbon budgets, and mitigation plans.

Provincial and municipal climate change needs assessment and response plans	CCA Chapters 4–5	Climate needs assessments and response plans integrated into existing provincial and municipal planning mandates.
PCC reconstitution under the Climate Change Act	CCA Section 10(4)(a)	Twenty-five commissioners were appointed by the President on 2 January 2026 for the 2026 to 2030 tenure, following the August 2025 public nomination process. Constituted; first 2026 meeting pending.
PCC Schedule 3A listing under the Public Finance Management Act	PFMA Schedule 3A regulations	Regulations published for public comment in December 2025; listing not yet in force. Once listed, the Commission will table annual reports and strategic plans for parliamentary scrutiny under its cross-cutting mandate.
Public participation in climate instruments	CCA Section 32	Transparent, consultative process for all climate governance instruments and key decisions.
Public involvement in legislative and oversight processes	Constitution Sections 59, 72, 118	Facilitate meaningful participation; Doctors for Life standard.
Just Transition procedural justice	Just Transition Framework (2022)	Inclusive processes enabling affected communities to shape transition policies.
Climate finance and fiscal accountability	CCA; Carbon Tax Act; JET-IP	Parliamentary oversight of climate expenditure, carbon tax, and transition investment.
P20 parliamentary obligation clusters	P20 (2025); Ginindza (2025)	Five clusters: legislation and oversight, capacity, budget and finance, accountability, institutional sustainability.
PPF Level 4: Collaborate	PPF (2013)	Citizens partner with Parliament in designing and producing governance outcomes.

Section 4: Situational Analysis

The 7th Parliament's handling of climate governance oversight since June 2024 is the subject of this situational analysis. The assessment identifies nineteen committees across both houses as holding substantive climate oversight mandates and classifies their activity across five functional clusters derived from the Climate Change Act's obligations. The period under review covers the first 22 months of the 7th Parliament, from June 2024 to March 2026. This initial assessment is a baseline on which a full scan of the responsibilities of all the committees can be built.

The analysis draws on Parliamentary Monitoring Group records as the primary evidence source, published parliamentary programmes, and a multi-department parliamentary staff consultation conducted on 24 March 2026. The staff consultation brought together a team of senior managers with responsibilities spanning knowledge and information services, committee support, public participation, public education, and climate and environment content advisory. Their contributions, provided from operational knowledge in a staff-level verification exercise and not as institutional endorsement, inform the assessment throughout.

4.1 Climate governance in the 7th Parliament

The general election of May 2024 produced no outright majority, giving rise to South Africa's first Government of National Unity at national level since 1999. The 7th Parliament operates under coalition conditions that affect its capacity to set thematic priorities. Committee chairpersons are drawn from multiple parties and require political agreement to set the agenda. Parliamentary staff consulted confirmed that committee priorities are ultimately determined by the political programme of each Parliament, and that if the 7th Parliament's political leadership determines that poverty alleviation or other concerns take precedence, the administrative establishment cannot independently redirect committee attention toward climate governance (parliamentary staff consultation, 24 March 2026).

This institutional reality frames the analysis that follows without diminishing the constitutional obligations it assesses. Coalition politics shapes what is politically feasible in any given term; the constitutional obligation to oversee the Climate Change Act's implementation applies regardless of which parties hold committee chairs.

Structural changes affecting climate oversight

Several structural changes in the 7th Parliament's committee system directly affect how climate governance is distributed across portfolios. The National Assembly established 30 portfolio committees, increased from 27 in the 6th Parliament, while the NCOP reduced its select committees from 11 to 10. Three realignments carry specific implications for climate oversight.

The creation of a standalone Department of Electricity and Energy generated a dedicated portfolio committee with a mandate covering the Integrated Resource Plan, the Renewable Energy

Independent Power Producer Procurement Programme, grid decarbonisation, and the energy mix. This separation gives electricity and energy policy a dedicated oversight platform for the first time. As a consequence the committee's climate engagement is concentrated in the mitigation and energy transition dimensions of its mandate. It also separates climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts, meaning that committee mandates are not distributed across the broader climate governance obligations that fall to other portfolios.

The separation of Mineral and Petroleum Resources from Energy split fossil fuel extraction policy from the renewable energy agenda. What was previously a single portfolio committee managing the tension between coal dependence and decarbonisation is now two committees with distinct mandates, one oriented toward extraction and the other toward the energy transition. Whether this separation enables clearer oversight of each dimension or severs the policy connection between them is a question the committee mapping below addresses empirically.

The dissolution of the Department of Public Enterprises transferred oversight of Eskom and Transnet to the Portfolio Committee on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation. Eskom's coal fleet decommissioning programme, the Komati repurposing project, and the broader alignment of state-owned enterprise operations with climate commitments now fall within the mandate of a committee whose institutional orientation is government-wide monitoring and not sectoral energy policy. This placement has consequences for the Just Transition analysis below.

The Presidential Climate Commission

The Presidential Climate Commission was set up in 2022 as an advisory body and was reconstituted under the Climate Change Act 22 of 2024 for the 2026–2030 tenure, with twenty-five new commissioners appointed by the President on 2 January 2026 in terms of Section 10(4)(a) of the Act, following a public nomination process initiated in August 2025 (The Presidency, 2026). The reconstituted Commission represents business, labour, civil society, traditional leadership, youth, and the South African Local Government Association. The Deputy Chairperson is to be announced at the first 2026 meeting of the Commission.

The regulations operationalising the PCC's status as a Schedule 3A national public entity under the Public Finance Management Act were published for public comment in December 2025. Once the listing takes effect, the PCC will table annual reports, strategic plans, and annual performance plans for parliamentary scrutiny, and the Auditor-General will audit the entity on Parliament's behalf. The parliamentary scrutiny instruments associated with Schedule 3A status, including annual reports, strategic plans, annual performance plans, and Auditor-General audit, do not yet apply to the PCC.

This combination of facts carries direct implications for parliamentary oversight. The Climate Change Act establishes the Commission, the President has reconstituted it, and the administrative

completion of the Schedule 3A listing under a separate statute is the step that places the Commission within Parliament's standard accountability framework.

The Commission's advisory, coordinating, and reporting functions under the Climate Change Act acquire a direct parliamentary accountability dimension that did not exist when the PCC operated as an advisory body within the Presidency. The Portfolio Committee on Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment has engaged with the PCC through a dedicated workshop, as the committee mapping below documents; the question for the guide's recommendations is whether a single committee provides sufficient parliamentary oversight of a body whose mandate spans the cross-cutting territory the committee mapping documents.

The NCOP's integrative capacity

The NCOP's committee system presents a structurally distinct potential for climate governance. Because select committees bundle portfolios that the National Assembly distributes across multiple committees, individual NCOP committees hold jurisdiction across the policy domains that climate governance connects. The NCOP's constitutional role under Section 42(1)(b), ensuring that provincial interests are taken into account in the national sphere, positions it as the natural site for scrutinising the vertical coordination of climate policy between national government and the nine provinces. This integrative capacity has not been activated for climate oversight in the 7th Parliament; the specific committee configurations and their potential are assessed below in the provincial and NCOP analysis.

Parliamentary planning and the committee programming constraint

Parliamentary staff described the practical constraints on committee programming with particular clarity during the 24 March consultation. Each committee is allocated approximately 35 meeting slots per annum, a ceiling within which committees must accommodate departmental strategic plan briefings, quarterly performance reviews, annual report scrutiny, budget processes, legislation, oversight visits, and any additional business the chairperson prioritises. The Portfolio Committee on Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, which the committee mapping below identifies as the only committee sustaining active climate oversight across all five functional clusters, was described as 'rolling over other items' to accommodate its climate programme within the standard allocation (parliamentary staff consultation, 24 March 2026).

This observation carries a direct implication for the guide's recommendations: any mechanism that requires additional committee time competes with existing constitutional functions, and recommendations that do not reckon with this constraint risk being operationally impractical.

The consultation also confirmed that committees only developed their strategic plans for the 7th Parliament in the latter part of 2025, approximately 18 months after the Parliament was constituted. The delay reflects the complexity of establishing a new Parliament under coalition conditions, encompassing negotiations over committee chairpersonships, the reconstitution of membership,

and the procedural foundations required before substantive planning can begin. Parliamentary staff noted that they are 'still struggling with ensuring that what is on the plan actually translates into the programmes of the various committees' (parliamentary staff consultation, 24 March 2026). The committee climate oversight assessment below should be read with this timeline in view: the 7th Parliament's committee system has been operating with strategic direction for fewer than six months at the time of writing.

Taken together, these constraints and transitional dynamics indicate that the deliberative options the guide proposes must be designed to integrate into existing committee workflows, operate within limited meeting allocations, and prioritise flexible, low-burden mechanisms that can be incrementally embedded as committees stabilise their programming and strategic alignment.

Parliament's public participation advancement programme

The 24 March consultation revealed that Parliament is actively investing in its participation system through a programme of six concurrent initiatives within the current financial year. These are:

- a Public Participation Improvement Plan addressing identified gaps including feedback mechanisms;
- the operationalisation of the PPM through a Technical Coordination Committee that oversees implementation across the participation system;
- a dedicated Public Participation Section responsible for standardising legislative integration and driving uniformity across participation processes;
- a strategic approach to public participation encompassing collaboration with provincial legislatures, municipalities, and democracy-supporting institutions;
- an accessibility programme addressing language provision across the twelve official languages; and
- an internal audit function monitoring implementation of these reforms (parliamentary staff consultation, 24 March 2026).

A separate Accountability Standards and Gaps study is examining whether the Executive is adequately held to account through committee oversight processes, a project that parliamentary staff suggested could be extended to incorporate climate-specific accountability dimensions. This study's relevance is that it asks the same institutional question in relation to climate governance specifically.

These institutional interventions are significant for two reasons. They confirm that Parliament is actively strengthening its participation system, meaning that the assessment that follows does not describe a static institutional environment. They also confirm, by their own terms, that gaps exist in the current system: the Improvement Plan responds to identified participation deficits; the standardisation initiative responds to inconsistency; the accessibility programme responds to

language barriers that constrain meaningful engagement. The guide's contribution is to identify where these interventions have not reached the climate governance domain specifically, and where the PPF's highest participation level, Level 4 (collaborate), remains sporadically operationalised for any policy area, a question the public participation assessment below addresses in detail.

Contextualising the trajectory

The previous section documented that the 6th Parliament demonstrated both the institutional will and the operational capacity to treat climate governance as a cross-cutting challenge, through the Climate Change Bill process across all nine provinces, the Joint Steering Committee on Climate Change as the first cross-portfolio coordination mechanism, and the enacted Climate Change Act itself. The dissolution of the Joint Steering Committee on Climate Change with the end of the 6th Parliament is a lapse that directly informs the guide's recommendations on institutional permanence through standing orders. It underscores that demonstrated capacity does not guarantee institutional continuity.

The analysis that follows asks a specific question: to what extent is the 7th Parliament's committee system exercising its climate oversight mandate under the Climate Change Act, and where are the specific gaps that the guide's options are designed to address? The findings are measured against what is constitutionally required and institutionally committed, with full recognition of the operational conditions, the programming constraints, and the delayed strategic planning, under which the 7th Parliament is working.

Box 4.1: Parliamentary staff consultation — findings (24 March 2026)

A multi-department consultation brought together senior managers with responsibilities spanning knowledge and information services, committee support, public participation, public education, and climate and environment content advisory.

Committee programming constraint: Meeting slots are centrally allocated. The Environment committee accommodates its climate programme by displacing other items. Any mechanism requiring additional committee time competes with existing constitutional functions.

Strategic plan timeline: Committees only finalised their strategic plans for the 7th Parliament in late 2025, approximately 18 months after the Parliament was constituted. The committee system has been operating with strategic direction for fewer than six months at the time of this assessment.

Participation reform programme: Six concurrent initiatives are underway in the current financial year: a Public Participation Improvement Plan, PPM operationalisation through a Technical Coordination Committee, a dedicated

Public Participation Section, a strategic collaboration approach with provincial legislatures and municipalities, an accessibility programme across twelve official languages, and an internal audit function.

Feedback gap acknowledged: Staff described the absence of systematic feedback to participants as 'an issue that has been realised not only by Parliament, but by provincial legislatures as well.'

Stakeholder databases fragmented: Databases are 'scattered amongst us,' held within individual committee processes and not centralised or accessible across the institution.

Administrative versus political pathways: Staff distinguished between changes requiring political endorsement and those the administration can implement independently, identifying database consolidation and online feedback mechanisms as areas where 'some things can really truly be administratively implemented and managed.'

Climate as pilot: Staff proposed that climate change could serve as a pilot subject area for the accountability mechanisms Parliament is developing.

4.2 Committee climate oversight responsibilities and performance

Climate change is a whole-of-government, whole-of-economy challenge. The Constitution's environmental right under Section 24 applies across government and private parties; the Climate Change Act distributes reporting, planning, and accountability obligations across multiple government departments; and the physical impacts of climate change do not respect departmental boundaries. The analytical framework applied in this section maps each committee's substantive climate exposure in terms of its portfolio mandate and assesses the gap between that exposure and documented activity. The result is a diagnostic of where parliamentary oversight of climate change is active, where it is partial, and where it is absent. This is the constitutionally significant question: the committee system distributes oversight across specialised bodies to match departmental mandates, while the same institutional logic requires the distribution of climate oversight to match the cross-cutting character of the challenge.

Methodology and sources

The assessment covers the period from May 2024 to March 2026 and draws on Parliamentary Monitoring Group records as the primary source of documented committee activity, supplemented by the published parliamentary programme. PMG is an independent civil society organisation providing the most comprehensive publicly available record of committee proceedings. Two caveats apply: PMG monitoring does not extend systematically to provincial legislatures beyond the Western Cape, and some committee activities may occur without generating PMG records.

Activity classification

In line with the Climate Change Act's cross-cutting obligations, each committee is required to actively interpret and define the scope of its climate-related mandate, drawing on deliberative engagement with relevant stakeholders and constituencies to ground this mandate in its specific sectoral context. While all committees have a role to play in climate governance, for the present purposes nineteen committees across both houses were identified as holding substantive climate oversight mandates. These were assessed across five functional clusters derived from the Climate Change Act's obligations: greenhouse gas mitigation, climate adaptation and resilience, climate finance and fiscal instruments, Just Transition, and international obligations and climate diplomacy. Each committee was classified as active or inactive using a binary assessment.

A committee is classified as active where it treats climate as a substantive dimension of its oversight mandate, with multiple dedicated sessions since May 2024 and climate appearing as a recurring element of the committee's programme. A committee is classified as inactive where it has not exercised its climate oversight mandate in the 7th Parliament. This classification encompasses a range of situations: committees where climate-related content has appeared as background within non-climate business without the committee treating it as a substantive oversight matter; committees where a single climate-specific engagement has occurred that has not consolidated into systematic practice; and committees with no recorded climate-related content in their proceedings.

The binary classification reflects a deliberate analytical choice. Anything short of sustained, dedicated engagement represents a mandate that has not been activated. A committee that received a single briefing or in which climate appeared as a subsidiary element of non-climate business is not actively overseeing the climate dimensions of its portfolio, even if it is closer to activation than a committee with no climate-related activity at all. Parliamentary staff confirmed during the 24 March consultation that the 7th Parliament only finalised committee strategic plans in late 2025, as set out above, which means that the assessment measures a committee system that has been operating with strategic direction for fewer than six months. This context is acknowledged; the constitutional obligation to oversee the Climate Change Act's implementation began with its commencement on 17 March 2025, regardless of the pace at which committee planning proceeded.

Cluster findings

Figure 4.1: Committee climate oversight gap matrix, 7th Parliament (May 2024 to March 2026)

[Production note: Insert Figure 4.1 committee oversight gap matrix showing 2 of 19 committees active, 0 cross-portfolio coordination mechanism, 0 climate-specific plenary debates, 0 PPF Level 4

engagements since adoption in 2013; bar chart of active versus inactive committees by functional cluster. Source: PMG records, May 2024 to March 2026.]

Source: PMG records, May 2024 to March 2026.

Cluster 1: Greenhouse gas mitigation. Mitigation is the central, internationally facing obligation of the Climate Change Act, incorporating the Paris Agreement NDC and the 2050 Low Emissions Development Strategy. Of twelve committees with substantive mitigation-related mandates, two are active. The Portfolio Committee on Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment sustains the heaviest climate programme in Parliament, with twelve or more dedicated climate meetings since May 2024, including a PCC workshop, an oversight visit to the Komati Power Station in Mpumalanga, strategic plan briefings with climate as a stated priority, COP outcomes briefings, and quarterly performance reviews tracking climate-related expenditure.

The Portfolio Committee on Electricity and Energy is active in the mitigation cluster through engagement with the Eskom revised JET Plan, G20 Energy Transitions Working Group briefings, IRP 2025 development, and renewable energy contracting concerns. The remaining ten committees are inactive, although two show a single significant engagement: the Standing Committee on Finance recommended a Climate Budget Statement during fiscal framework hearings in March 2025, and the Portfolio Committee on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation received a DPME briefing on climate interventions and Just Transition in March 2026. Neither engagement has consolidated into standing practice. The transport sector contributes approximately ten per cent of national emissions; the Portfolio Committee on Transport has not held a dedicated climate session despite the Department having produced both a Draft Transport Sector Just Transition Plan and a reviewed Green Transport Strategy during 2024/25, neither of which was tabled as a committee item.

Cluster 2: Climate adaptation and resilience. Climate adaptation oversight has not yet been activated as a substantive programme by any committee in either house. The ten committees with substantive adaptation exposure represent the next institutional site for the guide's recommendations to apply. The Climate Change Act's adaptation provisions under Sections 19 to 22 establish the statutory framework for climate change needs assessments, adaptation scenarios, and risk-informed planning on which committee activation can build. Adaptation to the severe climate risks South Africa faces is urgent. Prolonged droughts, intensified flooding, rising temperatures, crop failure, disease vector shifts, and infrastructure degradation interact with the vulnerabilities identified in the constitutional equality clause (Section 9) and threaten existing development gains.

The Portfolio Committee on CoGTA has raised concerns about severe delays and administrative bottlenecks in disaster grant disbursement, pointing to systemic capacity constraints within the national disaster funding system. This was treated as a disaster management matter, not as a climate adaptation oversight item.

Cluster 3: Climate finance and fiscal instruments. The Environment committee is the only committee actively overseeing climate finance, through DFFE budget scrutiny including tracking of unspent climate and air quality allocations and PCC funding. Phase 2 of the carbon tax, covering the critical 2026 to 2035 period, has not received dedicated committee scrutiny. Climate-specific audit oversight has not yet featured in SCOPA's programme, despite the scale of public spending the JET-IP alone represents, estimated at R311 billion from international partners with the pledge since increased to approximately US\$12.8 billion. The 2026 Budget cycle proceeded without a documented climate-specific lens applied to expenditure and revenue generation. The Standing Committee on Finance's recommendation for a Climate Budget Statement, if adopted, would create the kind of recurring accountability mechanism that is currently absent; the recommendation itself confirms the committee's recognition of the gap while underscoring that the gap remains.

Cluster 4: Just Transition. Just Transition oversight has not yet been activated as a substantive programme by any of the seven committees with substantive Just Transition exposure for the labour-market, social-protection, and economic-transformation dimensions of the transition. This finding carries direct implications for tens of thousands of coal workers and their communities in Mpumalanga facing structural economic transformation driven by international commitments and the Climate Change Act. The Portfolio Committee on Employment and Labour, which has direct oversight responsibility for the labour market consequences, has not held a dedicated session on this question. Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation received the single most direct Just Transition engagement in the 7th Parliament outside the Environment portfolio, a DPME briefing in March 2026.

The PCC's Framework for a Just Transition emphasises that inclusive decision-making processes are essential to bring together all stakeholders, especially those who are vulnerable (PCC, 2022); a parliamentary platform through which those stakeholders can engage systematically with the transition is not yet established across the relevant committees.

Cluster 5: International obligations and climate diplomacy. South Africa held the G20 Presidency in 2025, chairs the G77+China group, and has been a prominent voice in UNFCCC negotiations. COP delegation reporting remains confined to the Environment committee. The diplomatic, trade, and finance dimensions of South Africa's international climate engagements are currently scrutinised in distinct portfolios. The guide identifies the coordination of this scrutiny as a specific institutional opportunity, particularly given the institutional momentum generated by South Africa's G20 presidency and its standing in UNFCCC negotiations and the G77+China group. The Portfolio Committee on International Relations and Cooperation received EU/UK JET cooperation briefings and has not yet established climate diplomacy as a standing agenda item.

Aggregate finding

Table 4.1a: Climate oversight assessment by classification, 7th Parliament (May 2024 to March 2026)

Classification	Committees	Climate clusters	Evidence profile
Active	PC Forestry, Fisheries & Environment	5 of 5	Multiple dedicated sessions across all clusters; climate as standing programme element
Active	PC Electricity & Energy	2 of 5 (mitigation, international)	Active in energy transition and mitigation; inactive across adaptation, finance, Just Transition
Inactive (single significant engagement)	SC on Finance	2 of 5	Climate Budget Statement recommendation (March 2025); not consolidated
Inactive (single significant engagement)	PC Planning, M&E	3 of 5	DPME climate and Just Transition briefing (March 2026); not consolidated
Inactive (background context only)	5 committees	2 to 3 of 5 each	Climate referenced in departmental briefings as subsidiary to non-climate business
Inactive (no recorded climate content)	10 committees	1 to 3 of 5 each	No PMG record of climate-related content in the 7th Parliament

Table 4.1b: Climate oversight assessment by functional cluster, 7th Parliament (May 2024 to March 2026)

Functional cluster	Active	Inactive	Key finding
Greenhouse gas mitigation	2	10	Forestry, Fisheries & Environment committee carries a full programme; PC Electricity & Energy active through JET/IRP engagement. Portfolio Committees of Transport, Agriculture, Trade Industry & Competition, Mineral & Petroleum Resources, Human Settlements, Water & Sanitation, Public Works & Infrastructure, and Health have not yet activated their mandates despite substantive exposure.

Functional cluster	Active	Inactive	Key finding
Climate adaptation and resilience	1	9	Forestry, Fisheries & Environment committee active. No other committee has conducted dedicated adaptation oversight despite the CCA's Chapter 4 provincial and municipal planning requirements.
Climate finance and fiscal instruments	1	6	The Standing Committee on Finance recommended a Climate Budget Statement (March 2025); not yet adopted. Carbon tax Phase 2 (2026 to 2035) has not received dedicated scrutiny. SCOPA climate-specific audit oversight is not yet in programme.
Just Transition	1	6	Forestry, Fisheries & Environment committee and Energy committee active through JET Plan engagement. No dedicated Just Transition oversight by PC on Employment & Labour, PC on Trade, Industry & Competition, PC on Social Development, or PC on Higher Education & Training.
International obligations and climate diplomacy	1	2	The Forestry, Fisheries & Environment committee conducts COP outcomes briefings. PC on International Relations & Cooperation has not yet established climate diplomacy as a standing agenda item.

Source: PMG records, May 2024 to March 2026. Binary classification: active = sustained dedicated engagement; inactive = mandate not yet activated. Tables 4.1a and 4.1b present the same finding from different angles: 4.1a by classification across the committee system, 4.1b by functional cluster across the Climate Change Act's obligations.

The overall pattern across the five clusters shows that climate oversight in the 7th Parliament is currently concentrated in two of the nineteen committees with substantive climate mandates. Of the seventeen committees where climate oversight has not yet been activated, two show a single significant engagement that could form the basis for activation; five show climate appearing as background context within non-climate business; and ten show no recorded climate-related activity in the period under review. This distribution identifies the committees where the conditions for activation of the guide's recommendations are closest to being met.

Implications

The concentration of active climate engagement in a single committee, with the Electricity and Energy committee active in only two of five clusters, creates a structural vulnerability in Parliament's climate oversight function. A single committee, the Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment portfolio, carries the climate oversight burden across all five functional clusters while operating within the same 35-meeting annual allocation as every other committee. The committee system's design logic is to distribute oversight across specialised bodies to match departmental expertise. This compels the equivalent distribution of climate oversight, because every department overseeing an economic sector has climate obligations under the Act regardless of whether its oversight committee has activated them.

The participation dimension is directly implicated. No committee other than the Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment portfolio has conducted public hearings specifically on the climate dimensions of its mandate. This creates the opportunity for the 7th Parliament to host climate-specific sectoral engagements or a climate-themed People's Assembly. The Climate Change Bill hearings across all nine provinces during the 6th Parliament, established in the previous section as evidence of system capacity, demonstrated that Parliament can mobilise its participation system for climate governance when a specific legislative process requires it; the systematic application of that capacity across the committee system has not followed. This finding is assessed against the PPF's participation levels in the public participation analysis below.

4.3 Provincial legislatures and the NCOP

The Climate Change Act creates new legal obligations for provincial and municipal governments. Section 8 requires that provincial and municipal intergovernmental forums also serve as climate change forums, reporting to the presidential or provincial forums respectively on the coordination of climate change response actions. The Act requires provincial and municipal climate change needs assessments, response plans, and implementation plans. These provisions generate a direct oversight responsibility for provincial legislatures and, through the NCOP's constitutional role under Section 42(1)(b) in ensuring that provincial interests are considered and coordinated at the national sphere, for Parliament's second chamber.

The evidence available for provincial assessment is substantially more limited than for national committees. PMG monitoring does not extend systematically to provincial legislatures beyond the Western Cape, which means that the absence of documented climate oversight activity in a province may reflect a monitoring gap rather than an oversight gap.

The assessment that follows relies on PMG records where available, published parliamentary programmes, provincial government documentation, and the broader institutional record. It should be read as indicative and not definitive, with the caveat that the guide's recommendations include

improved monitoring of provincial committee activity through the South African Parliamentary Institute.

Provincial climate oversight: the evidence

Of nine provincial legislatures, the Western Cape has the most clearly documented record of systematic climate oversight. Eight provinces show minimal documented engagement with climate governance through their legislative oversight processes.

Three provinces illustrate distinct dimensions of the gap, each carrying different implications for the guide's recommendations.

KwaZulu-Natal: adaptation and disaster resilience. The April 2022 floods killed at least 459 people, displaced over 40,000, and caused infrastructure damage exceeding R17 billion. KwaZulu-Natal was among the most engaged provinces during the Climate Change Bill mandate process in the 6th Parliament, proposing gender-specific vulnerability mapping amendments, and the province is an Under2 Coalition member. The legislature's record since that engagement illustrates a pattern in which participation in a single legislative process does not translate into sustained oversight of the policy domain that legislation addresses. KwaZulu-Natal's adaptation and disaster resilience obligations under the Climate Change Act, in a province with documented catastrophic climate vulnerability, are not the subject of systematic legislative oversight.

Mpumalanga: energy transition and coal phase-down. The province hosts 12 of Eskom's 15 coal-fired power stations and is the centre of the approximately US\$8.5 billion Just Energy Transition Investment Plan. The executive branch has responded with the Mpumalanga Green Cluster Agency, which coordinates approximately R75 billion in green economy projects, provincial climate strategies, and a JET and Climate Change Coordinating Committee. The Komati Power Station repurposing is the most advanced coal decommissioning project in the country.

The NCOP's operational gap

The NCOP's select committees bundle portfolios that the National Assembly distributes across multiple committees, giving individual committees jurisdiction across the policy domains that climate governance connects. The Select Committee on Agriculture, Land Reform, and Mineral Resources can scrutinise the interplay between energy transition, environmental regulation, and extractive industry futures within a single session.

The Select Committee on Cooperative Governance and Public Administration oversees both CoGTA and Water and Sanitation, giving it direct jurisdiction over the Climate Change Act's provincial and municipal forum provisions.

This integrative capacity has not been activated for climate governance in the 7th Parliament. The NCOP's role in representing provincial interests places it in a constitutionally mandated position to scrutinise the vertical coordination of climate policy between national government and the nine

provinces, a function that the GRI governance report (2020) and the Climate Action Tracker assessment (2020) both identified as a persistent weakness in South Africa's climate governance arrangements.

The NCOP's secondary legislative role, smaller staffing complement, and the political reality that National Assembly portfolio committees dominate policy scrutiny all contribute to the under-utilisation of this structural advantage.

One documented engagement illustrates both the potential and the limitation: the Select Committee on Cooperative Governance and Public Administration's Saldanha engagement in December 2024, during which fishing communities described shrinking fishing seasons linked to climate impacts. This was climate-adjacent content within a non-climate programme item, not a dedicated climate oversight engagement; it demonstrates that climate concerns are entering NCOP proceedings through community testimony even where the committee programme does not frame them as climate matters.

The guide's recommendations on a standing climate agenda item and on provincial committee enhancements are designed to convert this organic emergence into systematic practice.

Implications for the guide

The provincial and NCOP analysis carries three implications for the guide's recommendations.

The Climate Change Act's provincial forum provisions create an institutional mechanism that connects directly to both provincial legislatures and the NCOP, and that mechanism is not operational. Activating the forums is a precondition for effective provincial climate oversight; the Speakers' Forum is identified as the adoption mechanism in the guide's recommendations.

Climate change and the energy transition impact communities across the provinces differently, yet coal workers in Mpumalanga, flood-affected residents in KwaZulu-Natal, and rural communities in the Eastern and Northern Cape do not yet have systematic access to legislative oversight of the policies that will shape their futures. This finding reinforces the best-fit criteria's insistence on localised engagement connected to provincial and municipal governance processes (condition 4) and the frontloading of conditions that enable participation by the most vulnerable (condition 5).

The NCOP's integrative committee system offers a design resource for the national level. If a single select committee can hold jurisdiction over the policy domains that climate governance connects, the institutional logic supports the creation of an equivalent coordinating mechanism in the National Assembly, a question addressed directly in the guide's cross-portfolio coordination recommendations.

4.4 Public participation in climate governance: current practice and gaps

The PPF, adopted by the Speakers' Forum in 2013, establishes a four-level participation ladder: inform, consult, involve, and collaborate/partner. The PPM operationalises this ladder through institutional mechanisms, standard operating procedures, and coordination arrangements. The previous section assessed the PPF as a national evaluative instrument and documented the six-initiative reform programme through which Parliament is currently strengthening its participation system. This section applies the PPF to climate governance specifically, asking where current parliamentary practice sits on the ladder and where the gaps lie between adopted commitment and operational reality.

Levels 1 to 3: a functioning system with documented constraints

Parliament's participation system operates across the first three levels of the PPF ladder in ways that are institutionally established, constitutionally grounded, and, in the climate domain, demonstrably capable. The Climate Change Bill process confirmed that Parliament can mobilise its participation system for climate governance at scale. Sector parliaments, Taking Parliament to the People, constituency offices, and public hearings provide established mechanisms through which citizens engage with legislative and oversight processes. The PPM's Technical Coordination Committee oversees coordination across these mechanisms, and Parliament's Public Participation Section drives standardisation and uniformity (parliamentary staff consultation, 24 March 2026).

Parliamentary staff were clear during the 24 March consultation that the participation system is not static. The six-initiative reform programme documented earlier is actively addressing identified gaps, including feedback mechanisms, language accessibility, and collaboration with provincial legislatures. Internal auditors are scheduled to audit the implementation of these initiatives at the close of the current financial year, and parliamentary staff indicated that if the audit had been conducted ten months earlier, the picture would have been substantially different from the one the guide now describes (parliamentary staff consultation, 24 March 2026).

Figure 4.3: Public Participation Framework levels applied to climate governance

[Production note: Insert Figure 4.3, PPF four-level participation ladder applied to climate governance, showing Parliament's operating levels 1 to 3 as institutionally established with climate-specific gaps indicated at each level, and Level 4 (collaborate/partner) flagged as not yet operationalised for climate governance.]

The guide acknowledges this progression as part of the institution's ongoing investment in deepening its public engagement programmes.

Level 4: the collaboration gap in climate governance

The PPF's fourth level, Collaborate/Partner, envisions citizens and civil society participating in the design of oversight and legislative processes, co-producing governance outcomes and not simply responding to processes designed without their involvement.

Parliamentary staff consulted indicated that they had external programmes that attempted to reach Level 4, acknowledging that 'they are limited in number' (parliamentary staff consultation, 24 March 2026).

The assessment that follows specifies the parameters that distinguish Level 4 from Levels 1 to 3 and applies them to current climate governance practice.

The guide assesses against the PPF as the Speakers' Forum-adopted national evaluative instrument, while recognising that the PPM's operational focus and the PPF's systemic focus are complementary: strengthening the PPM's Level 4 operational capacity is a necessary condition for achieving the PPF's Level 4 systemic ambition.

The PPF's own description of Level 4 requires that citizens and civil society participate in the design of the process itself, that their input shapes both the structure and the content of engagement, and that the relationship between Parliament and participants is one of partnership in producing governance outcomes. These parameters distinguish Level 4 from Level 3 (Involve), where citizens participate in a process Parliament has designed, and from Level 2 (Consult), where citizens provide input that Parliament may or may not incorporate.

Assessed against these parameters, the following findings apply to climate governance in the 7th Parliament.

No committee has invited citizens or civil society organisations to participate in the design of a climate oversight process. The committee hearing format, in which Parliament sets the terms of reference, invites submissions, receives testimony, and determines how to use the input, operates at Levels 2 and 3. This is constitutionally compliant: the Doctors for Life standard requires reasonable steps toward meaningful participation, and well-conducted public hearings meet that standard. The question is whether Parliament's own adopted framework calls for something beyond constitutional compliance, and the PPF's Level 4 does.

No climate-specific sectoral engagement has been documented in the 7th Parliament and the existing participation programmes, sector parliaments, Taking Parliament to the People, and constituency offices, have not been directed toward climate governance as a substantive focus in the current term. The Climate Change Bill hearings during the 6th Parliament operated at Levels 2 and 3: Parliament designed the process, invited submissions, and conducted hearings, with the public responding to a process Parliament had structured. That process was exemplary within its level. The Climate Assembly UK, established in the comparative case evidence as similarly

operating at Levels 2 and 3 in the PPF's terms, confirms that even well-resourced assembly processes do not automatically produce Level 4 practice; Level 4 requires the shift from Parliament-led consultation to collaborative co-creation in which participants shape the process itself.

Parliament's suggestion during the 24 March consultation to pilot Level 4 practice in climate governance provides an opportunity for the guide's recommendations to be tested operationally.

The feedback gap

The absence of systematic feedback to participants following public engagement processes is the most consistently identified operational deficit across the guide's evidence base. Parliamentary staff acknowledged the gap directly, describing it as 'an issue that has been realised not only by Parliament, but by provincial legislatures as well' (parliamentary staff consultation, 24 March 2026). The OECD Guidelines for Citizen Participation Processes (2022) identify the feedback loop, informing participants how their input influenced decisions, as a design condition that correlates with successful participatory outcomes. The UK Environmental Audit Committee's evidence cycle, described by the Clerk during the 26 March consultation, publishes all submissions with parliamentary privilege and lists each in the final report with references showing how the evidence was used, a practice that sustains engagement because 'people can see how the evidence was used' (practitioner consultation, 26 March 2026).

Parliament's stakeholder portal, developed as a pilot and not yet officially launched at the time of the 24 March consultation, represents a concrete step toward closing this gap. The portal provides an online repository listing Bills that went through public hearings, documenting what happened to the legislation and where hearings were conducted. Parliamentary staff described the portal as 'ultimately supposed to be accessible, not only to Parliament, but to external stakeholders such as communities and various organised bodies,' and identified it as a platform that could be extended to include feedback loops (parliamentary staff consultation, 24 March 2026). The guide's feedback recommendations build on this existing initiative and do not propose a parallel system.

Stakeholder databases and participant access

Parliamentary managers identified the fragmentation of stakeholder databases as a practical constraint on effective participation. Databases are 'scattered' across committees and divisions, including the Parliamentary Communication Service Division; they are held within individual committee processes and not centralised or accessible across the institution (parliamentary staff consultation, 24 March 2026). This fragmentation has direct consequences for climate governance, where the cross-cutting character of the policy domain means that stakeholders relevant to one committee's climate mandate, a renewable energy company, a coal community organisation, a climate research institute, may be unknown to another committee with overlapping climate exposure.

Staff distinguished between recommendations that require political endorsement and those that the administration can implement independently, identifying database consolidation and online feedback mechanisms as areas where 'some things can really truly be administratively implemented and managed' without requiring political buy-in (parliamentary staff consultation, 24 March 2026). This distinction between administrative and political pathways for implementation is adopted in the guide's phased implementation pathway, where database management and portal enhancement are classified as immediate administrative actions, with certain immunity against change in political landscapes.

Climate literacy and knowledge management

Parliament's research unit provides committee support across all portfolio areas, which means no dedicated climate research capacity exists. The cross-cutting character of climate governance compounds this constraint: effective climate oversight requires researchers to work across portfolio boundaries, a function the current portfolio-specific allocation model does not support. Scottish Parliament staff identified dedicated research capacity as essential to the Conveners Group's effectiveness, providing the cross-cutting analytical support that enables committees to interpret evidence across portfolio boundaries, integrate climate considerations into sectoral oversight, and sustain informed decision-making beyond individual political cycles (Scottish Parliament consultation, 25 March 2026). Any participation mechanism beyond a conventional hearing requires evidence briefs in accessible language, multilingual summaries, background materials calibrated to varying literacy levels, and facilitation capacity, all of which must be built progressively.

Assessed against the best-fit criteria the previous section established, this gap implicates condition 9 (parliamentary capacity constraints), condition 3 (accessible climate information), and condition 11 (hybrid communication methods). The UK Environmental Audit Committee's model of drawing on the National Audit Office's environmental audit capacity for data analysis, described during the 26 March practitioner consultation, provides a design reference: a small committee team supported by external analytical capacity and not building all expertise internally. The South African equivalent, the Auditor-General's office incorporating climate as an area of inquiry, is recommended as an enabling condition in the guide's recommendations on cross-portfolio coordination.

From demonstrated capacity to standing practice

The public participation capacity demonstrated through the Climate Change Bill process of the 6th Parliament serves as evidence that Parliament's system can operate at full capacity for climate governance when a specific legislative trigger requires it. That capacity has not yet been extended into the 7th Parliament's oversight programme: no equivalent climate-specific participation process has been conducted since the Act's commencement, and the committee oversight activity

documented in the preceding subsections has not generated the kind of sustained public engagement the Bill process mobilised.

The question is whether participation capacity demonstrated through a single legislative process can be converted into a standing feature of the committee system's climate oversight programme, operating as a regular dimension of how Parliament exercises its mandate under the Climate Change Act. The guide's recommendations are designed to answer that question in the affirmative, assessed against the best-fit criteria and grounded in what the evidence base, both international and from Parliament's own institutional experience, indicates is operationally achievable.

Three structural gaps emerge from this assessment. The absence of a defined institutional pathway connecting citizen input to committee decision-making beyond the standard hearing format; the absence of a systematic feedback protocol informing participants how their contributions influenced outcomes; and the fragmentation of participant selection, with no consolidated mechanism for identifying and reaching the constituencies most affected by climate policy. These three gaps, institutional pathway, feedback protocol, and participant selection, define the design specifications that the guide's recommendations are constructed to address.

4.5 What the Climate Change Act requires

The Climate Change Act creates the most comprehensive set of parliamentary oversight obligations South Africa's legislative sector has faced in the climate domain. The governance framework analysed in Section 3 established what the Act requires; the preceding subsections of this section documented what the 7th Parliament's practice delivers. This subsection draws the two together, mapping the Act's specific provisions against documented institutional practice to identify where the statutory framework has been activated and where it has not.

Practitioner evidence from the UK Environmental Audit Committee suggests the foundational diagnostic for any climate coordination body: to establish which department has overall responsibility for delivering the Act's requirements, whether National Treasury is aligned, and how departments identify and coordinate their obligations across portfolios (practitioner consultation, 26 March 2026). Parliament has not yet conducted this inquiry. An internal process to map the climate change-related mandates and how deliberative approaches outlined here can support committees in fulfilling them would be a prelude to such an exercise. The table below lays the foundation for that inquiry and identifies the specific provisions that it would need to address.

Table 4.2: Climate Change Act provisions mapped against parliamentary practice, 7th Parliament

CCA provision	Parliamentary oversight requirement	Status in the 7th Parliament (May 2024 to March 2026)
Provincial Forums on Climate Change (Section 8)	Premiers, district, and municipal intergovernmental forums to serve as climate change forums; reporting on coordination of climate response actions	No Provincial Forum constituted in any province. No parliamentary oversight mechanism for vertical coordination operational.
Sectoral emissions targets and carbon budgets (Sections 14 to 17)	Sector ministers set targets; carbon budgets as compliance mechanism; Minister consolidates and reports to Cabinet	Carbon tax Phase 2 (2026 to 2035) has not received dedicated committee scrutiny. No climate-specific budget disaggregation across departments.
Provincial and municipal climate response plans (Sections 19 to 22)	Provincial and municipal climate change needs assessment and response plans	No documented legislative oversight of provincial or municipal climate planning.
PCC reporting to Parliament (Section 12)	PCC advises, coordinates, and reports to the National Assembly; Schedule 3A	Parliamentary engagement confined to a single committee (PC Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment). No cross-portfolio scrutiny of PCC mandate.
Public participation in climate governance instruments (Section 32)	Meaningful public participation when developing sectoral emissions targets, adaptation strategies, and climate response plans	No climate-specific public participation process conducted. PPF or PPM Level 4 not operationalised for climate governance.
Cross-portfolio coordination	Act distributes obligations across all departments; every organ of state must align policies, plans, and decisions with CCA objectives	Joint Steering Committee lapsed May 2024, not re-established. No Committee of Chairpersons directive on climate. No climate plenary debates scheduled.

CCA provision	Parliamentary oversight requirement	Status in the 7th Parliament (May 2024 to March 2026)
Financial oversight	Section 18 finance mechanism (deferred pending regulations); JET-IP (approximately R311 billion); carbon tax Phase 2	SCOPA: no climate-specific audit oversight. Appropriations: no climate expenditure disaggregation. Standing Committee on Finance recommended Climate Budget Statement (March 2025); not yet adopted.
Climate research and knowledge capacity	Cross-cutting oversight requires cross-portfolio analytical support	No dedicated climate research capacity. Portfolio-specific allocation model does not support cross-cutting analysis.

The table identifies a consistent pattern. The Climate Change Act's provisions create oversight obligations that are cross-cutting, multi-departmental, and vertically distributed across all three spheres of government. The parliamentary committee system, designed to distribute oversight across specialised bodies matching departmental mandates, has not yet adapted its operating practice to match the cross-cutting character of these obligations. The Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment portfolio carries the oversight burden across all five functional clusters while operating within the same programming constraints as every other committee. The resource model for addressing this without requiring new institutional capacity, drawing on the Auditor-General's office for analytical support as the EAC draws on the National Audit Office, exists within the South African system and is recommended as an enabling condition in the guide's recommendations.

Institutional continuity and political will

Parliamentary staff framed the relationship between administrative capacity and political prioritisation with candour during the 24 March consultation: the administration can implement certain operational improvements, including database consolidation, online feedback mechanisms, and standardised operating procedures. The integration of climate as a cross-cutting priority depends on political endorsement from the House Chairpersons, the Speaker, and the Committee of Chairpersons. Staff observed that initiatives established under one political dispensation are 'taken over by other events' under the next, a dynamic that the coordination mechanism lapse exemplifies (parliamentary staff consultation, 24 March 2026).

This observation identifies a structural vulnerability in mechanisms established by resolution of a single Parliament: they do not carry institutional permanence across terms unless deliberately reconstituted. Practitioner evidence on standing orders as the permanence device is directly

responsive: the UK Environmental Audit Committee's cross-cutting mandate has been embedded in the House of Commons standing orders since 1997, guaranteeing institutional continuity across 28 years and multiple changes of government (practitioner consultation, 26 March 2026). The guide's recommendation for a standing orders pathway, processed through the Rules Committee and the Subcommittee on Review of Assembly Rules, addresses the continuity problem that resolution-based mechanisms cannot solve. Legacy reports, identified by parliamentary staff as a continuity device, provide a complementary mechanism: the guide recommends that the 7th Parliament's legacy reporting embed the climate oversight commitments the guide proposes, creating a documented institutional expectation that the 8th Parliament must address.

Progression

The gap assessment must be read against two concurrent realities. The scale of the deficit is documented in the table above and across the preceding subsections. Against this, the institutional investment the 7th Parliament is making is substantial: the six-initiative public participation reform programme, the Accountability Standards and Gaps study, the stakeholder portal pilot, and the willingness of parliamentary staff to identify climate change as a potential pilot subject area for the accountability mechanisms they are developing.

The guide's framing is one of progression. Parliament is assessed against the commitments it has itself adopted, the constitutional obligations it operates under, the statutory framework the Climate Change Act has created, and the participation capacity the 6th Parliament demonstrated through the Climate Change Bill process. The guide's contribution is to identify the specific institutional distance between those commitments and current climate governance practice. It offers operationally assessed options for closing that distance, evaluated through the best-fit criteria against the specific conditions, constraints, and institutional resources of the South African parliamentary context.

The practitioner consultation with the UK Climate Assembly's lead researcher reinforced this progression framing. Shaw observed that the Climate Assembly UK came about through a confluence of circumstances and that the productive question for any parliament is how to strengthen the deliberative quality of the participation it already conducts (practitioner consultation, 31 March 2026). This observation directly validates the guide's approach: the guide's recommendations are designed to deepen the deliberative methodology of existing parliamentary engagement mechanisms.

4.6 Options assessed against best-fit criteria

Box 4.2: The eleven best-fit conditions (established in Section 3.7)

Each condition functions as an assessment criterion against which every option in Section 5 is evaluated. Numbered references throughout Sections 4 and 5 point back to this list.

- 1. Multilingual participation:** across the twelve official languages, including South African Sign Language.
- 2. Procedural justice:** across the triple crisis of poverty, inequality, and unemployment, linking climate to development concerns.
- 3. Accessible climate information:** calibrated to varied literacy levels and technical backgrounds.
- 4. Localisation:** across nine provinces with differentiated climate vulnerability, economic profiles, and institutional capacity.
- 5. Frontloaded enabling conditions:** for the most structurally excluded, including transport, timing, care responsibilities, and participation costs.
- 6. Organised representation:** through trade unions, civic organisations, party structures, and community-based movements.
- 7. Strengthening existing institutional instruments:** PPF, PPM, sector parliaments, Taking Parliament to the People, public hearings, not parallel infrastructure.
- 8. Cross-cutting climate coordination:** across portfolio committee mandates, addressing the documented coordination gap.
- 9. Parliamentary capacity constraints:** on staffing, research support, climate-specific expertise, translation services, and budget.
- 10. The Constitutional Court reasonable-steps standard** (Doctors for Life, 2006): notice, access, language, and preparation time.
- 11. Hybrid communication methods:** combining face-to-face, broadcast, and online channels to bridge the digital divide.

The previous section established eleven conditions that shape the design environment for any climate deliberative mechanism in South Africa and derived from those conditions a set of assessment criteria expressed as design questions. Those criteria were applied to the international mechanisms reviewed in the comparative case studies, producing two assessment tables: Table A comparing two coordination design logics (the Conveners Group distributed model and the EAC dedicated cross-cutting model) and Table B scoring four citizen participation mechanisms against four composite assessment dimensions derived from the eleven conditions. This subsection consolidates those assessments into a single summary scoring of the guide's recommended

options, states the position on national-scale sortition, and bridges to the options and implementation section that follows.

Summary scoring

The guide's recommended options fall into three tiers when scored against the best-fit criteria, reflecting the distance between what each option requires and what current South African parliamentary conditions can support. For ease of reference these have been grouped into four categories:

Institutional integration: do they work within existing parliamentary processes?

- Strengthening existing institutional instruments: PPF, PPM, sector parliaments, Taking Parliament to the People, public hearings, not parallel infrastructure.
- Cross-cutting climate coordination across portfolio committee mandates, addressing the documented coordination gap.
- Parliamentary capacity constraints on staffing, research support, climate-specific expertise, translation services, and budget.

Inclusion and access: do they accommodate equal opportunity for participation considering diversity?

- Multilingual participation across the twelve official languages, including South African Sign Language.
- Accessible climate information calibrated to varied literacy levels and technical backgrounds.
- Frontloaded enabling conditions for the most structurally excluded: transport, timing, care responsibilities, and participation costs.
- Hybrid communication methods combining face-to-face, broadcast, and online channels to bridge the digital divide.

Democratic culture: do they work with existing, organised forms of representation?

- Organised representation through trade unions, civic organisations, party structures, and community-based movements.
- The Constitutional Court reasonable-steps standard (*Doctors for Life International v Speaker of the National Assembly*): notice, access, language, and preparation time.

Climate governance fit:

- Procedural justice across the triple crisis of poverty, inequality, and unemployment, linking climate to development concerns.
- Localisation across nine provinces with differentiated climate vulnerability, economic profiles, and institutional capacity.

Table 4.3: Summary best-fit scoring of recommended options

Option	Institutional integration	Inclusion and access	Democratic culture	Climate governance fit	Overall assessment
Standing climate agenda item (5.2.1)	Strong	N/A (procedural)	N/A	Strong	Immediate; no barriers
Conveners Group coordination (5.2.2, immediate track)	Strong	N/A	N/A	Strong	Immediate; resolution or directive
Cross-cutting committee with audit powers (5.2.2, medium-term track)	Strong	N/A	N/A	Strong	Medium-term; Rules Committee pathway
Enhanced committee hearings with deliberative methodology (5.2.3)	Strong	Strong	Strong	Strong	Strong across all dimensions
Committee-connected citizens' panels (5.2.4)	Strong	Partial	Partial	Partial	Viable with adaptation; bounded committee connection mitigates limitations
Climate in sector parliaments (5.3.1) and TPTTP (5.3.2)	Strong	Strong	Strong	Strong	Mainstreaming within existing programmes
Provincial Forums and NCOP linkages (5.4.1)	Strong	Strong	Strong	Strong	Dependent on CCA Section 8 activation
Provincial committee enhancements (5.4.2)	Strong	Partial	Strong	Strong	Dependent on provincial institutional capacity

Option	Institutional integration	Inclusion and access	Democratic culture	Climate governance fit	Overall assessment
Provincial/municipal climate deliberation (pilot)	Partial	Strong	Partial	Strong	Viable at hyper-local, single-language, place-based scale

The scoring confirms a clear pattern. The options that score strongest across all dimensions are those that enhance existing parliamentary procedures and do not require new institutional infrastructure: the standing climate agenda item, the Conveners Group coordination model, enhanced committee hearings with deliberative methodology, and climate mainstreaming within sector parliaments and TPTTP.

These options work within the committee system's existing capacity, connect to defined parliamentary processes, and are compatible with South Africa's political culture of organised representation. They also respond directly to the parliamentary staff consultation's emphasis on what is achievable within current institutional arrangements and without requiring additional staffing, a consideration assessed under best-fit criterion 9 (parliamentary capacity constraints).

The Provincial Forum and NCOP linkage option scores strong across all four dimensions and is contingent on the constituting of Provincial Forums (including an oversight function over local governments) under Section 8 of the Climate Change Act, an executive action that lies outside Parliament's direct control. The guide recommends the Speakers' Forum as the adoption mechanism through which the legislative sector can drive this activation.

Sortition

The best-fit assessment produces a clear finding on the question of national-scale, sortition-based climate assemblies modelled on the Irish, UK, and Scottish precedents. These mechanisms are not institutionally feasible under current South African conditions (Venter, 2023).

The finding rests on the combined weight of four conditions. The organised representation condition (criterion 6) identifies a structural tension: sortition-based selection of individual participants is designed for contexts in which people are equally able to practise their civic agency individually, while South Africa's democratic culture operates through trade unions, civic organisations, party structures, and community-based movements, and the Just Transition Framework emphasises social compact-building through constituency-based engagement and structured stakeholder representation.

The geographic dispersal condition (criterion 4) compounds this: nine provinces with vastly different climate vulnerabilities, economic profiles, and institutional capacities mean that a nationally reflective assembly must bridge conditions that are qualitatively, not merely quantitatively, different. The parliamentary capacity condition (criterion 9) places a resource constraint on any mechanism requiring the staffing, facilitation, translation, and logistical infrastructure that a national assembly demands.

This finding identifies a bounded role for sortition. Sortition-based participant selection is viable within committee-connected processes where the standing committee provides the institutional pathway, within existing participation programmes such as sector parliaments where panels and hearings draw on established recruitment methods, and at provincial or municipal scale where the conditions that create obstacles at national level are less acute: a single-language engagement in a coal transition municipality, connected to the Provincial Forum on Climate Change under Section 8 of the Climate Change Act, operating within a community where participants share a lived experience of the transition. The guide recommends a provincial pilot as the appropriate entry point for climate assembly methodology in the South African context, assessed against the comparative case evidence and connected to the Climate Change Act's institutional provisions.

Conclusion

The situational analysis documents an institutional distance between what Parliament has committed to and what its current climate governance practice delivers. The committee oversight deficit, the provincial and NCOP gaps, the Level 4 participation and feedback deficits, and the coordination and financial oversight gaps together constitute the gap inventory the recommendations address. That distance is actively being addressed through the institutional investment documented at the opening of this section: the reform programme, the stakeholder portal, and the willingness of parliamentary staff to identify climate governance as a pilot for the accountability mechanisms they are developing all indicate that the guide's recommendations land on prepared ground.

Section 5 presents the options for closing that distance, organised around enhancing committee work, mainstreaming climate into participation programmes, provincial legislature involvement, and institutional requirements. Each option is assessed against the best-fit criteria, connected to the Climate Change Act's provisions, and sequenced through an implementation pathway from immediate administrative actions to medium-term Rules Committee processes.

Section 5: Strengthening climate deliberation in South Africa's legislatures

This section draws on what makes deliberative climate participation effective in the international evidence, the institutional conditions specific to South Africa, and the current performance of the 7th Parliament measured against its own commitments, to present options for strengthening climate deliberation within South Africa's legislatures.

Enhancing citizen deliberation on climate in South Africa's legislatures depends on first strengthening deliberation within the parliamentary ecosystem itself. Section 2 establishes that parliaments are deliberative institutions by their nature: committees debate legislation, scrutinise the executive, and weigh competing arguments as a matter of constitutional function. The guide works from this foundation.

Internal deliberation within the parliamentary ecosystem, the engagement of Members, committees, and parliamentary staff with climate evidence and oversight, is the first domain the recommendations address. The standing climate agenda item, cross-portfolio coordination, and member and staff capacitation operate here.

External deliberation, the public participation and citizen deliberation through which communities, civil society organisations, and stakeholder bodies engage with legislative and oversight work, is the second domain. Enhanced committee hearings, citizens' and civil society panels, climate content within sector parliaments, climate content within Taking Parliament to the People, and the provincial legislature options operate here. The sequencing matters: a parliamentary ecosystem that has not developed the capacity to deliberate substantively on climate cannot meaningfully receive, weigh, or act on the outputs of enhanced citizen deliberation. The stakeholder database, the tracking system, and the communications function support both.

South Africa's Parliament possesses a constitutional mandate for public participation, an institutional infrastructure of established engagement programmes operating at national and provincial scale, and a depth of citizen engagement experience that exceeds the starting position from which many of the jurisdictions reviewed in Section 2 launched their deliberative innovations.

The international practitioner evidence reviewed in this guide confirms this comparative positioning: the UK Parliament, one of the examples reviewed in this guide, locates its documented climate assembly deliberation at a comparable point on the participation hierarchy to South Africa's current practice (practitioner consultation, 26 March 2026). The challenge is to move from participation that is extensive in its reach to participation that is deliberative in its quality, closing the distance between what the Public Participation Framework envisages at Level 4 and what the parliamentary system currently delivers.

The P20 resolutions identify three areas of best practice for parliamentary engagement on climate change: establishing cross-party committees dedicated to climate issues to promote cooperation and long-term policy continuity; strengthening the capacity of parliamentarians through training programmes and regular engagement with experts and stakeholders, enabling them to understand climate science, policy implications, and potential solutions; and sustained collaboration with civil society, academic and research institutions, creating platforms for dialogue with parliamentary committees and supporting knowledge exchange that can inform both legislative work and constituency-level climate initiatives (P20, 2024). The Climate Change Act 22 of 2024 translates these international commitments into national statutory obligations, requiring the integration of climate change considerations into planning, budgeting, and reporting across every sphere of government and providing for parliamentary oversight of its implementation (Sections 7, 8, 15, and 32). This guide works from these two foundations, the P20 resolutions as the international parliamentary standard and the Climate Change Act as the national legislative mandate, to develop options that give practical institutional expression to these commitments within South Africa's parliamentary system.

Section 4.4 identifies three structural gaps that prevent South Africa's participation system from reaching Level 4 of its own Public Participation Framework: the absence of a defined institutional pathway connecting citizen input to committee action; the absence of a feedback protocol that closes the loop between participation and response; and the absence of participant selection methods that reach beyond established stakeholder networks. Every option in this section is assessed against all three. An option that does not address all three reproduces the conditions under which existing participation processes have not achieved Level 4.

Section 4.4 identifies three structural gaps between South Africa's adopted Public Participation Framework and operational practice at Level 4: the absence of a defined institutional pathway connecting citizen input to committee action; the absence of a feedback protocol that closes the loop between participation and response; and the absence of participant selection methods that reach beyond established stakeholder networks.

Underlying these three gaps is a foundational condition documented in the committee oversight assessment: the deliberative capacity within committees to engage substantively with climate governance is itself not yet fully operational. Where seventeen of nineteen committees with climate-relevant portfolios have not activated their climate oversight mandate, the parliamentary institution is not yet positioned to receive, weigh, or act on the outputs of enhanced citizen deliberation. The guide's recommendations therefore proceed in sequence: strengthening the internal parliamentary ecosystem's capacity to deliberate on climate is the foundation from which the legislatures can enhance their public participation and citizen deliberation programmes on climate through the deliberation methodologies the international evidence base has developed.

The design-critical finding underpinning the feedback requirement is established in Section 4.4: participation without feedback can generate cynicism among citizens who invested time and engagement only to observe that their input was not visibly acted upon, as the OECD (2022) and the practitioner evidence from the UK Climate Assembly both confirm (practitioner consultation, 26 March 2026). Every option therefore specifies a feedback mechanism as a design-critical

component. The principle is that no participation process should be initiated unless the institutional infrastructure to close the feedback loop is specified in advance as part of the process design.

The options that follow are sequenced to address the gaps and enhance both internal and external deliberation. The standing climate agenda item, cross-portfolio coordination, and member and staff capacitation strengthen the parliamentary ecosystem's capacity to deliberate on climate. Enhanced committee hearings, citizens' and civil society panels, climate content within sector parliaments, climate content within Taking Parliament to the People, and the provincial legislature options then enhance the deliberative quality of Parliament's established public participation and citizen deliberation programmes. The stakeholder database, tracking system, and communications function support both, and the phased implementation pathway organises the options across the current parliamentary term and beyond.

Table 5.1: From diagnosis to recommendations

Gap identified	Recommended response	Section 5
17 of 19 committees inactive on climate	Standing climate agenda item	5.2.1
No cross-portfolio coordination since JSC lapsed	Three coordination models: immediate to standing orders	5.2.2
Hearings without deliberative methodology or feedback	Enhanced hearings: deliberative methodology, evidence cycle, portal	5.2.3
No sustained engagement beyond single hearings	Citizens' and civil society panels	5.2.4
Participation programmes not directed toward climate	Climate in sector parliaments	5.3.1
TPTTP not directed toward climate	Climate in Taking Parliament to the People	5.3.2
Provincial Forums not constituted; NCOP not activated	Speakers' Forum adoption; NCOP linkages	5.4.1
Provincial oversight weakest where stakes highest	Provincial committee enhancements	5.4.2

Gap identified	Recommended response	Section 5
No feedback loop; fragmented databases	Tracking system and consolidated database	5.5.2
Climate finance oversight not activated	AG climate audit; SCOPA climate expenditure	5.2.2
Climate literacy deficit	MP and staff capacitation	5.5.3
Institutional continuity vulnerable to electoral cycles	Standing orders and legacy reports	5.2.2, 5.7
Level 4 not operationalised	Every option closes the three structural gaps	All

5.1 Assessing deliberative mechanisms for South Africa's legislatures

The best-fit assessment in Section 4.6 evaluates each deliberative mechanism reviewed in Section 2 against the eleven South African conditions established in Section 3.7. The assessment produces the scoring that determines which mechanisms this section recommends, which it adapts, and which it does not recommend for the South African legislative sector at this stage.

Three findings from the assessment shape what follows. The mechanisms that score strongest are those that work within existing parliamentary structures: enhanced committee hearings, cross-portfolio coordination, and climate mainstreaming within sector parliaments and Taking Parliament to the People. These require no new institutions, no rule changes for their initial phase, and minimal additional budget. The mechanisms that score partially, citizens' and civil society panels and provincial committee enhancements, are viable with adaptation and piloting. The international climate assembly models reviewed in Section 2.3 do not pass the best-fit assessment against the conditions of organised representation, multilingual participation, geographic dispersal, and parliamentary capacity that apply in South Africa; the guide positions large-scale deliberative processes as a longer-term option building on the established sector parliament programme, addressed below.

The guide's position on sortition is established in the assessment: sortition of individual citizens is not recommended at national scale in the South African legislative sector at this stage, given the combined conditions of multilingual participation, geographic dispersal, and sampling infrastructure documented in the best-fit assessment. Sortition-based selection of stakeholder organisations from a consolidated database is viable and is specified below.

The options that follow are sequenced from the lowest procedural threshold to the highest, each building on the conditions the preceding options establish.

5.2 Enhancing committee climate oversight

The options in this subsection work within the existing committee system, activating mandates and processes that already exist. They are sequenced from the lowest procedural threshold through coordination mechanisms to enhanced participation methodologies.

5.2.1 Standing climate agenda item

Implementation timeline: Immediate. No legislative change required.

(a) Purpose and parliamentary use-case

The functional cluster analysis in Section 4.2 demonstrates that every committee has substantive climate dimensions within its portfolio, yet only two of 19 assessed committees are actively exercising their climate oversight mandates.

The standing agenda item activates climate oversight within individual committees. Cross-portfolio coordination addresses the absence of any means for coordinating scrutiny across portfolio boundaries, as the committee mapping documents. The Climate Change Act creates obligations cutting across every department, yet the committee system is organised by portfolio, and the 6th Parliament's Joint Steering Committee on Climate Change lapsed without being reconstituted.

The Scottish Parliament's Conveners Group climate priority, adopted in 2021, confirms the practical value. By 2023, 13 committees reported that they had conducted climate change scrutiny through different approaches. The Scottish experience demonstrates that a coordinated standing item keeps climate visible and gives impetus for committees to try different approaches, though its effectiveness depends on political renewal each session (Cook, practitioner consultation, 25 March 2026). This limitation informs the guide's recommendation that the standing item should be paired with the cross-portfolio coordination mechanism in Section 5.2.2.

(b) Implementation steps

National Assembly: The Committee of Chairpersons passes a resolution, or the Speaker issues a directive, requiring all portfolio committees to include a climate reporting item in their annual programme. The item should specify that the relevant department must report on the climate dimensions of its portfolio, including annual performance plan targets, budget allocations aligned with the national climate change response, and progress against Climate Change Act obligations. No rule change, new structure, or additional budget is required. The Committee of Chairpersons is the preferred mechanism because it creates peer accountability for implementation.

NCOP: The Chairperson issues an equivalent directive to select committees, with the additional requirement that select committees report on the climate dimensions of provincial compliance. The NCOP's integrative committee structure makes the standing item particularly effective: the Select Committee on Agriculture, Land Reform, and Mineral Resources can scrutinise the interplay

between energy transition, environmental regulation, and extractive industry futures within a single session, a cross-portfolio integration that no single National Assembly committee can achieve.

Provincial legislatures: The Speakers' Forum, through SAPI and LSS, adopts the standing agenda item as a sector-wide standard with a provincial focus on Climate Change Act obligations including Provincial and Municipal Forums (Section 8), provincial and municipal climate change needs assessments and response plans.

(c) Connection to the Climate Change Act

The standing item directly operationalises Sections 7, 15, and 32 of the Act. When combined with the Level 4 operationalisation pathway assessed in Section 4.4, it becomes the institutional vehicle through which collaborative oversight design is piloted: the committee invites its listed stakeholders to help determine what the climate scrutiny should focus on before the department appears.

(d) Option-specific risks

The specific risk is tokenism. Two option-specific mitigations apply: a climate question framework developed by KIS for each committee's portfolio, and annual reporting by the Committee of Chairpersons on implementation across all committees. The resource requirement is minimal; existing research capacity can be deployed in the manner SPICe subject specialists serve Scottish committees (Cook and SPICe, practitioner consultation, 25 March 2026). The cross-cutting enablers in Section 5.5 apply.

Best-fit assessment: Strong on institutional integration. Inclusion and access: not applicable (procedural mechanism). Democratic culture: not applicable. Strong on climate governance fit. The standing item is the minimum viable intervention and the foundation on which all subsequent options build.

5.2.2 Cross-portfolio coordination and climate auditing

Implementation timeline: Immediate (coordination model) to medium-term (audit model).

(a) Purpose and parliamentary use-case

The standing agenda item activates climate oversight within individual committees. Cross-portfolio coordination addresses the absence of any means for coordinating scrutiny across portfolio boundaries, as the committee mapping documents. The Climate Change Act creates obligations cutting across every department, yet the committee system is organised by portfolio, and the 6th Parliament's Joint Steering Committee on Climate Change lapsed without being reconstituted.

Three models address the coordination gap. They are not mutually exclusive; the guide recommends a phased approach.

Model 1: Coordinating committee (Conveners Group model)

The Committee of Chairpersons passes a resolution establishing climate as a cross-cutting priority, agrees specific coordination actions, and requires annual reporting. The model activates an existing mechanism, requires no rule change, and carries minimal resource implications. The Scottish experience since 2021 provides the operational evidence: the coordination function

generates cross-committee research briefings, and the Conveners Group created the institutional space for the People's Panel on climate (Cook, practitioner consultation, 25 March 2026). The limitation is dependence on political renewal each session and vulnerability to the same dynamic that caused the Joint Steering Committee to lapse.

Model 2: Climate audit committee (EAC model)

This is a dedicated cross-cutting committee with a permanent standing orders mandate to scrutinise the climate dimensions of any department's performance. The UK Environmental Audit Committee has operated continuously since 1997 under Standing Order No. 152A, surviving every change of government across 28 years (Cruse, practitioner consultation, 26 March 2026).

The EAC model, documented in Section 2.3, provides three operational features the South African context requires: cross-pollination of oversight through joint ministerial evidence sessions, requiring departments to account for how their commitments interact; drawing on an external analytical body for evidentiary capacity (the South African equivalent being the Auditor-General incorporating climate as an area of inquiry and SCOPA including a climate dimension in public expenditure oversight); and the inaugural inquiry as a strategic instrument establishing which department has overall responsibility for Climate Change Act delivery and whether National Treasury is aligned (Cruse, practitioner consultation, 26 March 2026).

The model requires a standing orders change through the Rules Committee. The Committee on the Presidency (Rules Committee endorsement October 2024, National Assembly adoption December 2025) provides the 7th Parliament procedural precedent.

Model 3: Combined coordination with audit powers (recommended)

The guide recommends sequencing the two design logics. Immediately, the Committee of Chairpersons adopts the coordination function (Model 1). In the medium term, the Rules Committee establishes a standing committee with a cross-cutting audit mandate (Model 2), providing institutional permanence.

(b) Implementation steps

Immediate: The Committee of Chairpersons adopts a resolution, KIS prepares cross-cutting briefing material. The lead committee is designated, most logically the Portfolio Committee on Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, to coordinate between committees and convene joint sessions where mandates intersect.

Medium-term: The Rules Committee develops a standing committee proposal specifying terms of reference, relationship with portfolio committees, and support requirements (Auditor-General, PBO, KIS).

NCOP: The Chairperson adopts an equivalent coordination resolution for select committees, with the additional mandate that select committees report on provincial climate compliance within their portfolio jurisdiction. The NCOP's structural advantage is that its select committees already integrate multiple portfolios, making the cross-cutting coordination function a natural extension of existing design logic. The NCOP's coordination function should be specifically tasked with tracking provincial compliance with the Act's subnational provisions: the establishment and functioning of

provincial and municipal climate change forums (section 8, 9), and provincial and municipal climate change needs assessments and response plans. The Select Committee on Cooperative Governance and Public Administration carries the most direct jurisdictional responsibility, given its oversight of CoGTA (which coordinates the intergovernmental forums under section 8) and Water and Sanitation (which intersects with climate adaptation at provincial and municipal level).

Provincial legislatures: The Speakers' Forum, through SAPI and LSS, adopts the coordination standard, connecting provincial committee coordination to the NCOP's vertical integration function.

Auditor-General and SCOPA: The guide recommends that the Auditor-General incorporate climate as an area of inquiry within its existing audit mandate, and that SCOPA include a climate dimension in its oversight of public expenditure.

(c) Connection to the Climate Change Act

The Act creates obligations for every organ of state (Section 7), requires coordination between spheres (Sections 8, 9, 12, and 15), and provides for parliamentary oversight (Section 32). No single portfolio committee can oversee this framework alone. The inaugural inquiry creates a public record of the executive's own understanding of its coordination obligations, the baseline for all subsequent oversight. Cruse's diagnostic question, who is in charge and is finance behind this, frames the inquiry's purpose precisely (practitioner consultation, 26 March 2026).

(d) Option-specific risks

The risk of duplication with portfolio committees is managed through a clear jurisdictional principle - the cross-cutting committee examines how commitments interact across boundaries; portfolio committees scrutinise performance within mandates. Another risk is that the lapsing at the end of the 7th Parliament: this is precisely why the guide recommends progression to standing orders, with the Legacy Report as the interim continuity device. The cross-cutting enablers in Section 5.5 apply.

Best-fit assessment: Strong on institutional integration. Inclusion and access: not applicable. Democratic culture: not applicable. Strong on climate governance fit. The combined model is the guide's recommended approach.

5.2.3 Enhanced committee public hearings

Implementation timeline: Short-term. Pilotable within existing committee programmes; no legislative change required.

(a) Purpose and parliamentary use-case

Enhanced hearings apply deliberation methodologies to Parliament's established public hearing practice. The Climate Change Bill process during the 6th Parliament conducted hearings across all nine provinces and generated legislation shaped by public input. The situational analysis documents two specific deficits: the absence of deliberative methodology, in which participants provide testimony without engaging with evidence or weighing trade-offs, and the absence of a systematic feedback loop. Enhanced hearings address both by shifting the committee's

engagement from passive evidence reception to structured interaction. The best-fit assessment finds that this mechanism scores strongest across all four assessment dimensions.

(b) Three elements of enhancement

Element 1: Deliberative methodology within committee proceedings

The EAC demonstrates three transferable approaches to embedding deliberative methodology within standard committee proceedings, documented in Section 2.3: the scenario exercise, in which participants model competing priorities and articulate trade-offs; the practitioner co-design model, in which affected practitioners educate the committee and co-design solutions; and targeted outreach, in which the engagement team identifies groups absent from written submissions and actively recruits their participation (Cruse, practitioner consultation, 26 March 2026). In the South African climate context, these approaches would engage communities in coal transition regions in modelling alternative livelihood scenarios, farmers in agricultural adaptation design, municipal officials in climate-resilient infrastructure planning, or community health workers in climate-health response strategy, for example.

Element 2: The evidence cycle as feedback loop

The EAC's evidence cycle, documented in Section 2.3, provides the operational model: published terms of reference, defined submission window, synthesis, publication with parliamentary privilege, all submissions listed in the final report showing how evidence was used, and a two-month government response deadline (Cruse, practitioner consultation, 26 March 2026). The critical design feature is the documented connection between evidence submitted and committee findings. Parliament's stakeholder portal pilot provides the technical infrastructure through which an equivalent evidence cycle could operate, connected to the tracking system in Section 5.5.2.

Element 3: Written evidence portal

A structured channel for submissions from participants who cannot attend in person, addressing geographic access constraints and language diversity. Parliament's current portal development (parliamentary staff consultation, 24 March 2026) provides the institutional foundation.

(c) Implementation steps

National Assembly: A pilot enhanced hearing on a climate inquiry integrating all three elements, connected to the standing climate agenda item (5.2.1). KIS and the Public Participation Section provide analytical and logistical support.

NCOP: Adapted for provincial representation, incorporating province-specific inputs through hybrid formats.

Provincial legislatures: Place-based deliberative hearings connected to local climate challenges: drought and water security in the Eastern Cape, coal transition in Mpumalanga, flood resilience in KwaZulu-Natal. Existing participation platforms, including IDP processes, ward committees, and local stakeholder forums, are used for recruitment and feedback.

(d) Option-specific risks

The time requirement is a risk: enhanced hearings require one to two full days, more than a standard hearing but substantially less than a citizens' assembly. The risk of domination by organised participants is addressed through targeted outreach and the facilitation protocols set out below. The evidence cycle is the structural mitigation for the broader tokenism risk. The cross-cutting enablers in Section 5.5 apply.

Best-fit assessment: Strong on institutional integration. Strong on inclusion and access. Strong on democratic culture. Strong on climate governance fit. The guide's highest-scoring participation mechanism.

5.2.4 Citizens' and civil society panels connected to committees

Implementation timeline: Short to medium-term. Standing procedure change required for institutional permanence.

(a) Purpose and parliamentary use-case

Panels extend the deliberation methodologies of the enhanced hearing into a sustained, multi-session process connected to a committee inquiry. Enhanced hearings broaden engagement; panels deepen it. Enhanced hearings broaden engagement; panels deepen it. A panel convenes 12 to 25 participants from stakeholder organisations and community representatives for a more intensive process connected to a specific committee inquiry. The panel receives evidence briefings, deliberates over multiple sessions, and produces recommendations the committee is required to receive, consider, and formally respond to. The outputs differ in kind: the hearing produces evidence for the committee to analyse; the panel produces analysis for the committee to engage with.

The Scottish People's Panel, formally institutionalised by parliamentary vote in June 2025, provides design inspiration. The Scottish Panel is lottery-selected; the guide proposes a managed-database adaptation suited to South African participation conditions, drawing on the Scottish precedent for its pilot-to-institutionalisation pathway, its arm's-length stewarding board, and its formal committee response protocol.

The international evidence base, including the practitioner consultations conducted for this guide, identifies the specification of an accountability pathway in advance as essential to deliberative process design: process quality on its own does not generate institutional consequence, and the comparator parliaments confirm that follow-through arrangements set at the design stage are what convert deliberative outputs into committee response.

(b) Design specifications

Arm's-length design: An independent stewarding board designs questions, manages the evidence programme, and oversees process integrity. Committee members receive the panel's report through formal proceedings. This separation is essential for credibility (PACT and SPICe, practitioner consultation, 25 March 2026).

Participant selection: Managed organisational selection from the consolidated stakeholder database set out below. The guide's position on individual sortition at national scale is established

in the best-fit assessment. Community-based organisations from directly affected areas are included alongside national civil society, organised labour, academic institutions, and private sector bodies. The stewarding board oversees selection to ensure balance and prevent capture.

Participation costs: Parliament covers the direct costs of participation (travel, accommodation, meals, and interpretation). The question of participant payment requires careful consideration in the South African institutional context; the pilot phase should assess whether direct cost coverage produces sufficiently broad participation.

Evidence programme: Structured briefings from experts selected by the stewarding board for balance and range. Participants are active questioners. The evidence programme draws on KIS capacity, supplemented by external expertise on the specific climate topic under consideration. The design should explicitly value multiple forms of knowledge: academic and scientific research, government data, lived experience testimony from affected communities treated as evidence of equal standing with technical input, and civil society and private sector perspectives. Specifications for expert selection and learning materials are addressed in the operational design specifications below.

Defined response protocol: Standing procedure requires the committee to receive the report, consider it formally, and produce a documented response specifying which recommendations it accepts, refers, or does not accept with reasons. In Scotland, a standing order change now requires chamber time for People's Panel reports, and the committee passes the report to the relevant cabinet secretary for government response (PACT and SPICe, practitioner consultation, 25 March 2026). This is the design feature that the international evidence base, drawing on practitioner consultations across the comparator parliaments, identifies as essential to converting deliberative outputs into institutional response. The response protocol is within Parliament's own control: committees have the constitutional tools to require departmental responses through their oversight mandate, to table questions for ministers, to seek debates on the floor of the House, and, where necessary, to amend government legislation. Parliament does not require executive agreement to establish the response protocol; it requires political will within Parliament's own institutional leadership. The guide also recommends engaging the Presidential Climate Commission, now operating as a Schedule 3A public entity with a statutory reporting obligation to Parliament, as a bridging institution that can receive panel outputs and integrate them into its advisory work with the executive. Parliament should pursue this connection, and the panel mechanism operates within Parliament's own mandate regardless of whether the PCC connection is secured.

Process integrity: In the GNU context, cross-party positioning and methodological rigour are conditions under which outputs survive political scrutiny.

(c) Implementation steps

Pilot (National Assembly): A Single panel is connected to a committee inquiry on a defined climate question and is connected to a committee that has demonstrated institutional appetite - most logically the Portfolio Committee on Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment or the Portfolio Committee on Electricity and Energy. The pilots have to be independently evaluated.

Institutionalisation: If the pilot demonstrates value, standing procedures embed the mechanism through the Rules Committee pathway.

NCOP: Province-specific panel connecting lived experience to the NCOP's integrative function: for e.g. coal transition in Mpumalanga, flood resilience in KwaZulu-Natal.

Provincial: Connected to Provincial Forums under Section 8 of the Climate Change Act.

(d) Option-specific risks

The perception of importing a Global North model is a risk which can be addressed through terminology ("citizens' and civil society panel") and positioning within the PPF and Climate Change Act. The arm's-length credibility requirement is also a mitigating factor: if any process aspect can be challenged as biased, outputs will be dismissed regardless of substance. The cross-cutting enablers in Section 5.5 apply.

Best-fit assessment: Strong on institutional integration. Partial on inclusion and access (pilot to inform). Strong on democratic culture. Partial on climate governance fit (depends on the committee choosing a climate topic). Viable within the guide's design specifications.

5.3 Climate in existing participation programmes

Sector parliaments and Taking Parliament to the People are Parliament's established public participation and citizen deliberation programmes; the recommendations that follow apply deliberation methodologies to the climate content each programme can carry. The sector parliament programme and Taking Parliament to the People carry existing budget, logistics, and political support and reach communities across all nine provinces. The enhancement proposed here is methodological: it works within these programmes.

5.3.1 Sector parliaments

Implementation timeline: Short-term. Implementable within existing programme budgets.

(a) Purpose and parliamentary use-case

The sector parliament programme's institutional strengths are substantial: it has standing orders authority, dedicated budget, decades of history, and community reach. Its participation gaps are equally documented: invitation-based selection meaning the same organisations dominate, no systematic feedback, and the absence of climate as a theme despite the Act's cross-cutting obligations and the just transition's implications for every sector constituency. The Women's Parliament should address gendered vulnerability to climate impacts, women's roles in adaptation, and the gender dimensions of the just transition. The Youth Parliament should address intergenerational equity, green economy employment, and youth participation in climate governance. The Workers' Parliament should address labour and the just transition, including coal transition, skills development, and social protection. Climate is not a separate sector; it is a cross-cutting dimension of every sector's governance challenge.

(b) Three enhancements

Enhancement 1: Managed stakeholder database with open registration

The current invitation-based methodology is replaced with the consolidated database specified in Section 5.5.2. Open registration for plenary, stratified selection from registered organisations for facilitated breakaway sessions, targeted outreach to directly affected communities.

Enhancement 2: Facilitated deliberation within breakaway sessions

Sector parliaments already use breakaway sessions in which participants work in smaller groups on defined policy questions. The enhancement applies deliberative methodology to these sessions: expert briefings providing accessible evidence on the climate dimensions of the sector question; facilitated small-group engagement where participants process the evidence, weigh trade-offs, and develop recommendations; and a structured synthesis process that consolidates breakaway recommendations for plenary tabling. This is the same methodology described in Section 5.2.3 applied within the sector parliament's existing design.

The facilitation approach should centre participants' lived experiences, whether floods in KwaZulu-Natal, drought in the Eastern Cape, or energy poverty across coal-dependent municipalities, as evidence that technical briefings alone cannot supply. The Climate Change Act and the Just Transition Framework both require the needs of vulnerable populations to be at the forefront of decision-making; the sector parliament's breakaway format, enhanced with facilitated deliberation, creates the institutional space for that requirement to be met. Facilitators should draw on the principles and practice specified in Section 5.6.2, including the valuing of multiple forms of knowledge and the active management of power dynamics within small groups.

Enhancement 3: Tracking and feedback

Each recommendation receives a tracking identifier connected to the system in Section 5.5.2. The receiving committee documents its consideration using the four-category framework. Participants receive notification of the published status through the portal. This converts the sector parliament from a Level 2/3 instrument (inform and consult) into a Level 4 instrument (collaborate, with documented accountability).

(c) Option-specific risks

The risk of superficial mainstreaming is mitigated by the committee connection through 5.2.1 and 5.2.2. The risk of resistance from established organisations is mitigated by the expanded parliamentary database, which is designed to enhance inclusiveness. The cross-cutting enablers in Section 5.5 apply.

Best-fit assessment: Strong across all four dimensions. Highest best-fit score alongside enhanced committee hearings.

5.3.2 Taking Parliament to the People

Implementation timeline: Short-term. Implementable within existing programme budgets.

(a) Purpose and parliamentary use-case

TPTTP, operated by the NCOP, provides a distinct engagement format: the NCOP sits outside the ordinary precincts of Parliament, bringing the institution to communities that cannot travel to Cape Town. The programme operates twice annually, in March and November, and brings together members at national, provincial, and municipal levels with communities on issues of service delivery and cooperative governance.

The guide does not recommend a standalone climate TPTTP. The programme serves the full scope of policy issues and should continue to do so. The guide recommends a climate-specific component within each programme, connected to the standing item (5.2.1) and coordination function (5.2.2), addressing province-specific climate governance questions through the facilitated deliberation methodology described in Section 5.3.1.

(b) Climate component design

The TPTTP climate component should be connected to the Provincial Forum on Climate Change under Section 8. Where the Forum has been constituted, the TPTTP session provides the parliamentary oversight connection: the NCOP hears from communities affected by climate impacts and assesses whether the Forum is fulfilling its coordination function. Where it has not, the session documents the gap and refers it to the relevant select committee, contributing to the provincial accountability function in Section 5.4. The Saldanha engagement documented in Section 4.3, where fishing communities described climate-related impacts within a non-climate programme item, demonstrates that climate concerns are already entering TPTTP proceedings organically; the enhancement converts this organic emergence into systematic practice with institutional accountability.

The existing follow-up visit cycle should be extended specifically to climate-related recommendations, with tracked feedback to communities on what the committee found and what actions resulted.

(c) Option-specific risks

The risk is that the climate component is absorbed into a general programme agenda without the deliberative methodology or feedback connection. This is mitigated by the standing item (5.2.1), the coordination function (5.2.2), and the tracking system (5.5.2). The cross-cutting enablers in Section 5.5 apply.

Best-fit assessment: Strong across all four dimensions. The TPTTP's existing community reach and the NCOP's integrative mandate make the climate component a natural extension of the programme's institutional design.

5.3.3 Climate assemblies: international evidence and South African assessment

South Africa has a long and varied tradition of large-scale dialogue processes spanning the full spectrum from national conventions to community-based engagement. The 2025 National Dialogue convened by the Presidency and civil society demonstrated the continuing institutional appetite for structured multi-stakeholder processes addressing complex governance challenges at national

scale. The sector parliament programme, the People's Assembly, Taking Parliament to the People, and provincial public engagement forums are all established dialogue formats with decades of operational history. The question is not whether South Africa can convene large-scale deliberative processes; the evidence confirms that it can and does, across multiple formats and in multiple languages.

The international climate assembly models reviewed in Section 2.3, Ireland, France, the UK, and Scotland, were designed for jurisdictions with fewer official languages, more concentrated geographic patterns of participation, and established population registers suited to postcode-based sortition.

South Africa's combination of twelve official languages, nine provinces with distinct climate vulnerabilities, and a participation infrastructure already operating at scale through multiple established programmes makes the sector parliament and Taking Parliament to the People enhancement pathway the more operationally realistic approach in the immediate and medium term.

A dedicated climate sector parliament, drawing on the sector parliament programme's existing institutional infrastructure and applying the deliberative methodology this guide recommends, is available as a longer-term option once the enhanced hearings and panel mechanisms have been piloted and evaluated. Given the multiple cross-cutting crises South Africa faces simultaneously, including the energy transition, water security, food systems, and fiscal sustainability, a future large-scale deliberative process on climate would likely need to address these interconnected dimensions together, as the 2025 National Dialogue addressed governance challenges across multiple policy domains. The phased implementation pathway in Section 5.7 positions this option in Phase 3, conditional on the demonstrated value of the earlier mechanisms.

5.4 Provincial legislatures and climate governance

Section 4.3 documents a pattern in which the provinces with the most acute climate governance stakes, Mpumalanga, KwaZulu-Natal, and the Eastern Cape, show the weakest legislative oversight, while only the Western Cape demonstrates systematic proactive activity. The capacity constraints provincial legislatures face are real. At the same time, the Climate Change Act creates provincial implementation obligations at least as complex as the national framework. No Provincial Forum on Climate Change has been constituted at the time of writing. The governance layer the Act creates has no parliamentary oversight mechanism operating at provincial level.

Provincial legislature engagement on climate follows the same sequence the national recommendations operationalise: strengthening provincial parliamentary deliberation on climate is the foundation from which provincial public participation and citizen deliberation on climate can be enhanced.

5.4.1 Provincial Forums on Climate Change and NCOP linkages

Implementation timeline: Short to medium-term. Dependent on Section 8 activation.

The NCOP's constitutional mandate under Section 42(1)(b), to ensure that provincial interests are taken into account in the national sphere, places it in a structurally mandated position to scrutinise the vertical coordination of climate policy between national government and the nine provinces. The NCOP's integrative committee system provides the institutional capacity: the Select Committee on Agriculture, Land Reform, and Mineral Resources can scrutinise the interplay between energy transition, environmental regulation, and extractive industry futures within a single session; the Select Committee on Cooperative Governance and Public Administration oversees both CoGTA and Water and Sanitation, giving it direct jurisdiction over the Act's provincial and municipal forum provisions. This integrative capacity has not been activated for climate governance in the 7th Parliament.

(a) Implementation steps

Speakers' Forum: Adopts climate as a sector-wide priority through SAPI and LSS. Three elements: provincial committees include a climate reporting item; provincial legislatures oversee Forum constitution and functioning; findings reported to the NCOP through existing mechanisms (negotiating mandates, provincial weeks, reporting from select committees) to enable the vertical integration of provincial climate oversight into national parliamentary scrutiny.

NCOP: Select committees incorporate climate as a standing dimension of their provincial oversight function, consistent with the national standing agenda item (5.2.1). The NCOP's specific focus should be vertical: tracking whether national departments are supporting provinces adequately, whether provincial and municipal climate planning is being coordinated through the statutory forums, and what implementation bottlenecks are emerging. During Taking Parliament to the People programmes, the NCOP incorporates the climate component recommended in Section 5.3.1. During provincial weeks, select committees receive briefings on Provincial Forum status and provincial climate response plan implementation. Through negotiating mandates on climate-related legislation, the NCOP exercises its Section 76 function with specific attention to provincial implementation capacity.

Provincial Forum oversight: Where a Forum exists, the committee oversees its functioning: whether it is meeting, whether it is coordinating climate response actions across provincial departments, and whether it is reporting to national coordination mechanisms. Where one has not been constituted, the committee documents and escalates, creating a public record of executive non-compliance that the NCOP can raise with the national executive. The act of documenting non-constitution is itself an oversight function with institutional consequence.

(b) Option-specific risks

A risk is that Forum provisions are not activated by provincial executives. This is mitigated by the dual-purpose oversight function. The cross-cutting enablers in Section 5.5 apply.

Best-fit assessment: Strong on institutional integration, inclusion and access, democratic culture, and climate governance fit. Dependent on Section 8 activation.

5.4.2 Provincial committee enhancements

Implementation timeline: Short-term. Implementable through provincial speakers' directives or committee of chairpersons resolutions.

The committee enhancements recommended for the National Assembly in Section 5.1 are designed for an institutional environment with dedicated research services, established committee support structures, and a committee system operating across 19 portfolio committees with full-time clerking teams. Provincial legislatures operate with fewer committees, smaller staffing complements, and more constrained analytical capacity. The enhancements recommended at national level cannot simply be transferred without adaptation.

At the same time, the communities experiencing very context specific climate change and the energy transition impacts, for example coal workers in Mpumalanga, flood-affected residents in KwaZulu-Natal, drought-affected farmers in the Eastern Cape, are constituencies of provincial legislatures. The governance need is most acute in the provinces where the legislative oversight capacity to address it is most constrained.

Three of the four Section 5.2 enhancements are recommended for provincial application, adapted to provincial institutional capacity.

Standing climate agenda item (adapted from 5.2.1): Provincial portfolio committees adopt a standing climate item with a provincial focus: Provincial Forum status, provincial and municipal climate needs assessment and response planning, and integration of these plans into provincial and municipal planning instruments. The Speakers' Forum resolution (5.4.1) provides the sector-wide mandate; the provincial committee of chairpersons or the speaker implements it within the provincial committee programme.

Enhanced hearings (adapted from 5.2.3): Provincial legislatures are better positioned for place-based deliberative hearings than the national Parliament because they engage communities with direct lived experience of the climate challenge under scrutiny. A hearing on coal transition in Mpumalanga, flood resilience in KwaZulu-Natal, or drought adaptation in the Eastern Cape operates in the predominant language of the province, engages communities whose livelihoods are at stake, and can draw on existing participation platforms, including IDP processes, ward committees, and local stakeholder forums, for recruitment and feedback.

The cross-portfolio coordination mechanism (5.2.2) is not recommended for provincial application in the immediate term. Provincial committee systems are smaller and less compartmentalised; a single committee may hold jurisdiction across multiple climate-relevant portfolios, and the coordination challenge can often be managed within existing structures.

(b) Option-specific risks

The wide variance in provincial institutional capacity is the specific risk. The Western Cape can implement these enhancements immediately. Mpumalanga faces a capacity gap requiring targeted support. The Speakers' Forum resolution establishes the standard; SAPI and LSS provide the capacity; individual provinces implement according to their starting position, supported by the capacitation programme set out below. The cross-cutting enablers in Section 5.5 apply.

Best-fit assessment: Strong on institutional integration, democratic culture, and climate governance fit. Partial on inclusion and access (dependent on provincial capacity).

5.5 Cross-cutting enablers

The options share a common set of enabling conditions operating along two axes: decisions requiring political authorisation by parliamentary leadership, and infrastructure requiring development by the parliamentary service. Both are essential; neither is sufficient on its own.

5.5.1 Political authorisation and cross-party positioning

The options require authorisation at three levels: the Executive Authority of Parliament, House Chairs, and the Committee of Chairpersons. The implementation pathway specifies which option requires which level of authorisation. Executive buy-in from the national government is desirable and is not a precondition; Parliament possesses the constitutional tools to act independently.

The practitioner's evidence converges on how buy-in is achieved: by demonstrating practical value, not by arguing for deliberative democracy in the abstract. Cruse confirms that MPs who were initially resistant found they enjoyed the process, valued the public relations benefit, and recognised the value of having assumptions challenged (practitioner consultation, 26 March 2026). Scotland reinforced this through the pilot-to-institutionalisation pathway (PACT and SPICe, practitioner consultation, 25 March 2026). The guide recommends beginning with the lowest-threshold options and seeking higher-threshold authorisations once value is demonstrated.

Cross-party positioning is structurally essential in the GNU context. Any mechanism characterised as serving a single party will not survive the 7th Parliament's political environment. The PCC's social compact approach and the JET-IP's economic framing provide the cross-party space. Parliamentary staff engagement, including the 24 March proposal to pilot climate as a subject area and to use the stakeholder portal for feedback, provides an additional institutional resource.

5.5.2 Stakeholder database and feedback tracking system

Two pieces of infrastructure underpin every option: the consolidated stakeholder database and the feedback tracking system. Both build on initiatives already under way.

The consolidated stakeholder database

The database replaces fragmented committee-level lists with a single cross-committee register maintained by the Public Participation Section with ICT-assisted management. Open to any organisation, community formation, trade union, academic institution, private sector body, or individual, registered by sector, province, language, and area of interest. Year-round registration replaces event-specific list compilation.

When a participation process is announced, selection proceeds through a managed methodology. For sector parliament steering committees it provides stratified selection of registered organisations to form a mixed steering committee with MPs. For enhanced hearings: targeted outreach to organisations absent from the established submission base. For panels: managed selection

spanning the relevant organisational landscape. A stewarding board or the Public Participation Section oversees balance and prevents capture.

At national level, the managed database broadens participation beyond established networks. At provincial and local level, community-based organisations embedded in the social fabric of affected communities, holding trust because they fill service delivery gaps and serving as connectors, are the primary recruitment channel. The selection protocols prevent capture. The international evidence confirms that active recruitment to reach communities that self-selection mechanisms exclude is the common principle across effective processes, whether in The Gambia, Brazil, Malawi, or South Africa (Lekalake and Buchanan-Clarke, 2026; Delibera Brasil, 2024).

The integrated feedback tracking system

Parliament already operates a bill tracking process that follows legislation through its stages, and the stakeholder portal pilot under development at the time of the 24 March consultation is building an online repository that links bills to their public hearing processes and documents outcomes. The tracking system this guide proposes extends that existing infrastructure from legislation to all participation processes: oversight inquiries, sector parliaments, Taking Parliament to the People, enhanced hearings, and committee-connected panels. The extension is incremental; the institutional investment decision has already been made.

The international evidence provides partial models from which the integrated proposal draws. The Brussels Parliament's Deliberative Committees require a full response within six months explaining what has been accepted or rejected and why; the initiative is permanent, with Parliament committed to running up to three committees per year (WFD/newDemocracy, 2021). Scotland's Climate Assembly benefited from a statutory response requirement: the government was legally committed to respond within six months, and an assembly secretariat organised meetings between key assembly members and politicians. The permanent Brussels Climate Assembly operates a four-step follow-up: assembly members submit their report at a public event; ministers respond within three months initially and twelve months in full; and a follow-up committee of ten assembly members monitors progress for one year (Abbas and Smith, 2024). The EAC publishes all evidence with parliamentary privilege and lists each submission in its final report with references showing how it was used (Cruse, practitioner consultation, 26 March 2026). Gdansk is the sole documented example of a binding commitment mechanism. No parliamentary system has yet implemented a comprehensive, institutionally embedded tracking mechanism that follows participation outputs from submission through committee consideration to published institutional response. The guide's proposal draws on these partial solutions to design an integrated system.

The system has five components.

First, every submission or recommendation arising from a participation process receives a tracking identifier at intake. The identifier links the submission to its originating process (legislation, oversight inquiry, sector parliament, TPTTP, enhanced hearing, or panel), the participating stakeholder or organisation, the receiving committee, and the date of receipt. Where the submission responds to an existing call for submissions on a bill or a defined inquiry, the routing is automated through the portal: the submitter registers, selects the process, provides their

submission, and the system assigns the identifier and directs it to the relevant committee. Where the matter is new, for example an oversight recommendation arising from a sector parliament or a TPTTP session, the Public Participation Section manages the routing to the appropriate committee.

Second, the receiving committee documents its consideration of tracked submissions through standing procedures adopted via the Committee of Chairpersons or the Rules Committee. The realistic design for South Africa's committee system, given the volume of submissions across 54 National Assembly and joint committees, NCOP select committees, and nine provincial legislatures, is categorical response at the process level: the committee responds to clusters of submissions by theme, documenting which categories of issue were raised, how they influenced the committee's conclusions, and what the outcome was. Documentation takes one of four forms: adopted (with reference to the committee decision or legislative provision); under consideration (with indicative timeline); referred to another committee or to the Executive (with referral destination and date); or not adopted (with documented reasons). This documentation is published on the stakeholder portal.

Third, registered stakeholders who submitted or participated in the originating process receive notification of the published status. Notification operates across relevant official languages and through the communication channels the stakeholder registered as preferred (SMS, email, portal). The system cannot be portal-only: SMS notification, community radio announcements on outcomes, and constituency office access to the tracking database are all part of the design, reflecting the communication realities of South Africa's population.

Fourth, the annual assessment of committee performance includes a compliance metric for feedback loop closure: the proportion of tracked processes in which the committee produced a documented institutional response within the specified timeframe. This metric is publicly reported. The compliance metric creates the institutional incentive to produce the responses; without it, the tracking system generates data that no one is required to act on.

Fifth, the stakeholder portal serves as the delivery infrastructure. The portal already lists bills that went through public hearings and documents what happened to the legislation; extending it to encompass tracked submissions and recommendations from all participation processes is an incremental expansion of an existing initiative.

The institutional challenge is not technology. It is committee documentation practice and political willingness to accept the accountability the system creates. The EAC's practice of listing every submission in its final report with references showing how the evidence was used represents an exceptional level of documentation by any parliamentary standard, supported by a dedicated team. For South Africa, the categorical response model, in which the committee responds to the body of submissions by theme and documents the connection between citizen input and committee conclusions, is the operationally realistic design that delivers the accountability function without overwhelming existing staffing capacity. The phased approach in Section 5.6, piloting the tracking system on one or two processes before institutionalising through standing procedures, is the way to demonstrate feasibility without requiring the entire committee system to change practice simultaneously. If implemented, this system would make South Africa one of the first parliamentary jurisdictions to close the participation feedback loop at an operational level, building on its own

constitutional mandate, its own existing infrastructure, and its own institutional appetite for the reform.

Consequence management: graduated escalation

The consequence management pathway builds on the EAC's graduated escalation model (Cruse, practitioner consultation, 26 March 2026). The sequence is: committee response protocol (documented consideration within a defined timeframe); evidence review (committee identifies gaps and requests additional information); ministerial or departmental engagement (committee calls the relevant executive authority to account); and parliamentary debate (escalation to the floor of the House, raising the political cost of non-compliance). Parliament's constitutional mandate provides the instruments: tabling questions, requiring appearances, amending legislation, conditioning budget approvals.

Technical infrastructure, including data field specifications, portal interface requirements, automated routing logic, and notification protocols, should be developed as part of the pilot design process.

5.5.3 MP and staff capacitation

Capacitation strengthens the analytical grounding on which Members, committees, and parliamentary staff depend to deliberate substantively on climate. Climate change is one of the few governance challenges that requires every committee, and every member, to think beyond the boundaries of a single portfolio. A member serving on the Portfolio Committee on Human Settlements must understand how climate-resilient building standards intersect with energy policy, water security, and disaster management. A member on the Portfolio Committee on Basic Education must understand how climate impacts on food security, water availability, and extreme weather events affect school infrastructure and learner outcomes. This cross-cutting quality makes climate an exceptionally effective vehicle for building the kind of integrated, systemic oversight capacity that strengthens governance across the board. Members who develop the analytical habit of asking how their portfolio intersects with climate governance are members who are better equipped to exercise oversight of any cross-cutting policy challenge, from the just transition to public health to food security to fiscal sustainability. The capacitation programme this guide recommends therefore serves a purpose beyond climate: it builds a body of knowledge and a mode of systemic thinking within the parliamentary institution that compounds over time as the challenge itself deepens across generations.

The institutional infrastructure for parliamentary capacitation already exists. The South African Parliamentary Institute (SAPI) coordinates capacity-building across the legislative sector, including members' induction programmes at the start of each parliamentary term and ongoing professional development throughout the term. The South African Legislative Sector (SALS) office provides sector-wide coordination, research support, and knowledge management. Knowledge and Information Services (KIS) and the Content Advisory Section provide committee-specific research and analytical support within the national Parliament. The Parliamentary Budget Office provides independent analysis of fiscal and budgetary matters. These institutional resources provide the

delivery mechanism for the climate capacitation programme; what is required is not new institutional infrastructure for capacitation, and is instead the integration of climate governance content into the existing capacitation channels.

The guide recommends that climate governance be incorporated into the members' induction programme from the start of the 8th Parliament, so that all incoming members receive a foundational briefing on the Climate Change Act's obligations, the just transition framework, and the climate dimensions of their specific portfolio responsibilities. For the current 7th Parliament term, a targeted capacitation programme should be developed and delivered through the existing institutional channels.

MP capacitation should address five areas: climate finance literacy, enabling committees to scrutinise climate-related expenditure, carbon tax implications, and Just Transition Investment Plan allocations; adaptation science for oversight, enabling committees to assess departmental adaptation plans against scientific evidence on provincial and sectoral vulnerability; JET governance and PCC accountability, enabling committees to exercise oversight of the PCC's statutory obligations and the just transition's cross-sector implementation; Climate Change Act reporting, enabling committees to use the Act's reporting provisions (Sections 15, 18, and 32) as the framework for departmental scrutiny; and deliberative methodologies, enabling members to understand how the enhanced hearings, panels, and sector parliament processes this guide recommends will operate and what their role as committee members is in receiving and responding to deliberative outputs.

Staff capacitation operates across two dimensions. KIS should designate or develop climate analytical capacity that serves the committee system as a whole, providing the kind of cross-committee analytical resource that SPICe subject specialists provide in the Scottish Parliament. The Content Advisory Section should develop portfolio-specific climate briefing material that each committee clerk can use to prepare members for the standing climate agenda item (5.2.1). The Public Participation Section requires training in deliberative process design, facilitation management, and the operation of the tracking and database systems this guide recommends. The Scottish investment in dedicated subject specialists demonstrates the value of building institutional knowledge that survives individual role changes and creates a cumulative analytical resource that deepens with each parliamentary term (Cook and SPICe, practitioner consultation, 25 March 2026).

Research partnerships should be established with the National Research Foundation (NRF), South African universities with climate governance research capacity, and the network of Science, Technology, and Innovation institutions that the Department of Science and Innovation coordinates. These partnerships give Parliament access to independent scientific and analytical expertise that supplements the in-house capacity of KIS and the PBO, so that committee scrutiny draws on the best available evidence on climate science, adaptation, mitigation, and just transition economics. They also create a structured relationship between the parliamentary institution and the research community that enables knowledge exchange in both directions: researchers inform parliamentary oversight, and parliamentary oversight priorities inform research agendas on climate governance. The PCC's existing relationships with the research community provide a starting point; the

parliamentary institution should develop its own direct relationships so that its analytical independence is not mediated through an executive body.

Provincial capacity support is delivered through SAPI and the Legislative Sector Support (LSS) programme, consistent with their existing mandate to support provincial legislatures. The capacitation challenge at provincial level is acute: provincial committee staff require climate governance briefing material, analytical support, and facilitation training that smaller provincial administrations cannot generate internally. KIS should extend its climate analytical support to provincial legislatures on request, creating a sector-wide research function. The Speakers' Forum resolution recommended for provincial legislatures should be accompanied by a dedicated provincial capacitation component, delivered through SAPI and LSS, that equips provincial committee staff with the knowledge and tools to support the standing climate agenda item and enhanced hearings at provincial level. The differentiated pace of implementation across provinces means that the capacitation programme must be designed for provinces at different starting positions: the Western Cape, with its established climate governance infrastructure, requires different support from Mpumalanga, which faces the most consequential climate governance challenge in the country with the least documented legislative oversight capacity to address it.

5.6 Designing and delivering deliberative processes

This subsection is addressed to the parliamentary staff who will design and deliver the participation processes: KIS, the Public Participation Section, the PBO, committee support teams, and the ICT division. The political authorisation framework and institutional infrastructure are addressed in Section 5.5.

5.6.1 The deliberative process lifecycle

The operational challenge the international evidence consistently identifies as under-resourced is not what happens when participants are in the room. It is what happens before and after. The OECD identifies ten steps in the full lifecycle; drawing on 289 case studies, the OECD established that half required 12 weeks or more of preparation, with 98 per cent requiring a minimum of five weeks (OECD, 2020). The ten steps, adapted for the South African parliamentary context, are:

1. Identifying the problem and the moment for participation: connecting the process to a defined committee inquiry, oversight question, or sector parliament theme.
2. Defining objectives and expected results: specifying the inputs the process will generate and how the committee will use them. Completed before recruitment begins.
3. Identifying and recruiting participants through the consolidated database (5.5.2), determining whether the process engages a broad group, a targeted group from specific sectors or geographies, or a mixed group.
4. Choosing the participation method from the options in Sections 5.1 through 5.2.
5. Choosing the right digital tools (5.6.3).
6. Communicating about the process before, during, and after (5.6.3).
7. Implementation: action based on the agreed timeline, including facilitation, venue, interpretation, evidence preparation, and logistical support.

8. Using stakeholder input and providing feedback through the tracking system (5.5.2).
9. Evaluating the participation process: independent evaluation of design, deliberation quality, and institutional response. Budgeted as a distinct component.
10. Fostering a culture of participation: building on South Africa's established tradition while extending deliberative quality to Level 4.

The comparative timelines documented in the Section 2 case studies confirm two operational findings. The preparation phase typically consumes three to six months. Climate Assembly UK required six months of preparation before its first weekend session. Scotland's Climate Assembly was designed and recruited over four months. The Gambia's North Bank Region Assembly required six months of preparatory work including community outreach, member selection, expert witness selection, and logistical planning, with ongoing engagement with an Oversight Panel to build trust among government and non-government stakeholders (Lekalake and Buchanan-Clarke, 2026). For the South African options, the standing agenda item and coordination resolution (5.2.1 and 5.2.2 Model 1) require minimal preparation; the enhanced hearing pilot (5.2.3) should plan for three months of preparation including terms of reference development, stakeholder outreach, evidence programme design, and facilitator engagement; and the panel pilot (5.2.4) should plan for four to six months.

The second finding is that the post-process phase is where deliberative processes most commonly stall across the international evidence base. Published reports, however well produced, rely on systematic committee follow-up that the comparator parliaments have not consistently provided. The tracking system specified in 5.5.2 is designed to address this post-process gap by specifying the institutional response pathway before the participation process begins.

5.6.2 Expert input and facilitation

Expert selection and learning

Expert selection should be managed by an independent body, whether a stewarding board or an advisory group constituted for the specific process. The design specifications should explicitly value multiple forms of knowledge: academic and scientific expertise, including climate science, adaptation planning, and just transition economics; government data and departmental evidence, accessed through KIS and the PBO; lived experience testimony from affected communities, treated as evidence of equal standing with technical input, reflecting the Climate Change Act and the Just Transition Framework's requirements that the needs of vulnerable populations be at the forefront of decision-making; and civil society, organised labour, and private sector perspectives. The African cases reviewed in Section 2.3 demonstrate effective models for multi-stakeholder advisory committees encompassing government, academia, civil society, and traditional authority representatives (Chirawurah et al., 2019; Lekalake and Buchanan-Clarke, 2026).

In the learning phase, space must be safeguarded for participants to interact with and learn from each other; participants are not empty vessels to be filled with knowledge from outside (DemocracyNext, n.d.). Where literacy constraints apply, briefing materials should take the form of video, visual, and oral presentations, as the Ghana and Malawi cases in Section 2.3 demonstrate (Chen, 2021). The International IDEA report on deliberative democracy in Africa argues that lived

experience, local and community knowledge, indigenous knowledge, scientific and technical expertise, and the perspectives of people most affected by climate impacts should all be valued as multiple forms of knowledge (Curato et al., 2024).

Facilitation model

Facilitation is a significant part of deliberative process design; it is not a design detail. The OECD identifies skilled facilitation as one of its Good Practice Principles: participants should be able to find common ground through careful and active listening, weighing multiple perspectives, every participant having an opportunity to speak, a mix of small-group and plenary formats, and skilled facilitation (OECD, 2020).

The guide recommends a mixed model for the South African context. The Public Participation Section provides coordination and institutional support, while facilitation of deliberative sessions is provided by independent professionals or trained civil society facilitators. A lead facilitator needs a strong grounding in the core values of deliberation, including impartiality, integrity, inclusion, and adaptability, and must be able to design context-sensitive processes, manage practical and political dimensions, handle conflict, include minority views, and support collective decision-making. The standard ratio is one facilitator per small group of six to eight participants, supported by a lead facilitator overseeing the overall process design (OECD, 2020).

The International IDEA report on deliberative democracy in Africa identifies skilled and context-sensitive facilitation, capable of managing inequalities related to gender, education, age, and social status, as one of the five design features that consistently supports effective deliberation (Lekalake and Buchanan-Clarke, 2026). Facilitators are not teachers; the roles serve fundamentally different functions, as the Malawi experience confirmed (Lekalake and Buchanan-Clarke, 2026).

The African cases reviewed in Section 2.3, particularly The Gambia, Malawi, and Mali, document five operational principles for facilitation in contexts comparable to South Africa: trust-building in the opening phase is critical for participants unfamiliar with structured political discussion; facilitators must actively manage power hierarchies including gender and status dynamics, intervening when individual participants dominate; facilitators should avoid expressing their own views, focusing on helping participants articulate solutions in policy-relevant language; local deliberative traditions can inform facilitation design while adaptations ensure inclusivity across age and gender; and multilingual deliberation is operationally achievable with proper preparation, including translation and validation of all recommendations in each language used (Lekalake and Buchanan-Clarke, 2026; Gaye, personal communication, 2025).

These principles are directly transferable to the South African context, where facilitation must navigate similar dynamics of power, language, and unequal familiarity with formal political processes. The South African legislative sector's existing facilitation capacity within the Public Participation Section provides the institutional base. Parliament should build internal capacity over time through the capacitation programme (5.5.3), with the aim that the Section develops expertise comparable to the Scottish Parliament's Participation and Communities Team. For the pilot phase, external facilitation professionals supplement internal capacity; the pilot evaluation should include a

specific assessment of facilitation effectiveness and identify the training requirements for sustained in-house delivery.

5.6.3 Communication and technology

The sector's communications infrastructure

The South African Legislative Sector adopted a Strategic Communications Framework through the Speakers' Forum in 2015, establishing sector-wide norms and standards for how Parliament and all nine provincial legislatures communicate with the public (Speakers' Forum, 2015). The Framework accompanies the Public Participation Framework (Speakers' Forum, 2013) and provides the institutional foundation on which the communication requirements of the options in this guide should be built. Three of the Framework's principles are directly relevant to the participation processes this guide recommends: communication is established as a strategic and political function central to the work of the legislative sector; institutions are required to commit dedicated resources, including multilingual capacity, to the function; and institutions are required to incorporate feedback mechanisms that close the loop with the public.

The Framework establishes that communication is a strategic and political function central to the work and management of the legislative sector, not an administrative afterthought (Speakers' Forum, 2015: Section 3). This means that the communication strategy for each participation process, whether an enhanced hearing, a panel, a sector parliament climate strand, or a TPTTP climate session, must be designed as an integral part of the process from the outset, with dedicated budget, staffing, and political oversight, consistent with the deliberative process lifecycle set out above.

The Framework requires that legislative institutions use at least three official languages in all communications and that all twelve official languages enjoy parity of esteem (Speakers' Forum, 2015: Section 11). South African Sign Language was recognised as the twelfth official language by the Constitution Eighteenth Amendment Act, 2023. For the climate participation processes this guide recommends, this minimum standard must be treated as a floor. Enhanced hearings in provinces where the predominant language is isiZulu, Sepedi, or Xitsonga must provide interpretation, briefing materials, and feedback notifications in those languages. The multilingual requirement is not a logistical add-on; it is a constitutional and institutional obligation that determines whether the participation process is accessible to the communities it is designed to reach. The African comparative cases, particularly The Gambia's validation of all recommendations in Fula, Mandinka, and Wolof, demonstrate that multilingual deliberation is operationally achievable with proper preparation.

The Framework requires institutions to incorporate mechanisms into online services for receiving and acknowledging public feedback and to confirm that information about external public consultations and citizen engagement activities is posted on institutional websites (Speakers' Forum, 2015: Section 12.7). This requirement connects directly to the integrated tracking system: the stakeholder portal's function of receiving submissions, assigning tracking identifiers, and

publishing committee responses operationalises the Framework's own minimum standard for online feedback mechanisms.

The Framework also establishes institutional coordination through the Public Participation, Petitions and Communications Forum, which provides the sector-wide platform for sharing best practices, resources, and tools across all eleven legislative institutions (Speakers' Forum, 2015: Section 18.1). The climate participation processes this guide recommends should be reported through this Forum, enabling provincial legislatures to learn from national pilot experiences and adapt communication approaches to their own institutional contexts and language environments.

Connecting deliberation to the wider public

One of the principal critiques of deliberative processes is that they involve small numbers of participants (Elstub and Escobar, 2025). Process designers should consider two dimensions: enabling the wider public to contribute to the deliberation itself, and designing a communication strategy that increases the visibility, transparency, and credibility of the process and its outputs.

Parliament's existing communication infrastructure provides the foundation: parliamentary broadcasting, community radio partnerships, the stakeholder portal, social media channels, and constituency offices. The Framework's minimum standard requires that each institution make optimal use of community radio (Speakers' Forum, 2015: Section 12.7). Community radio reaches communities in local languages where internet access is limited and is the most effective channel for reaching climate-affected communities in rural areas. The Framework also requires that printed material for public dissemination be published concurrently on the internet and that institutions maintain an active online presence enabling two-way communication and feedback (Speakers' Forum, 2015: Sections 12.7 and 12.8).

International examples illustrate approaches. Scotland's Climate Assembly website collected 230 ideas from 450 public registrations before the assembly convened; these were themed and considered as part of the assembly's work. The Austrian Citizens' Climate Council's online platform generated over 5,000 votes on statements written by assembly members, the results feeding into the deliberations (Paice and Rausch, 2022). In Mali, the citizens' jury was broadcast live on seven community radio stations in the Sikasso region, giving the process public visibility extending well beyond participants (Pimbert and Barry, 2021). The French Citizens' Convention was live-streamed throughout.

For the South African options, the communication strategy for each participation process should specify which channels will be used before, during, and after the process and should enable the wider public to contribute through the stakeholder portal, written submissions, or community radio engagement. The before phase should include calls for registration, accessible briefing material in at least three official languages, and media engagement explaining the process and its connection to climate governance. The during phase should include live broadcasting or streaming where feasible, social media updates, and community radio coverage. The after phase should include publication of the process report, committee response through the tracking system, and notification to participants and the wider registered stakeholder base of the outcome.

Budget allocation for communication

Communication should be budgeted as a distinct programme element, consistent with the Framework's requirement that institutions ensure the communication function has the resources needed to fulfil its mandate (Speakers' Forum, 2015: Section 12.2). International benchmarks indicate that communication should constitute between ten and twenty per cent of the total process budget: Climate Assembly UK dedicated approximately 20 per cent, including a detailed strategy, stakeholder and parliamentary involvement, regular media briefings, and support for participants who chose to speak to journalists (Bryant and Stone, 2020). The French Convention allocated 9.2 per cent (Convention Citoyenne pour le Climat, n.d.). The EAC allocates approximately one-fifth of each inquiry's budget to communication and stakeholder engagement, a practice described as essential to sustaining the engagement ecosystem (Cruse, practitioner consultation, 26 March 2026).

The Framework's training and professional development standards require institutions to foster professional development among communication staff and to facilitate communication training for employees who work directly with the public (Speakers' Forum, 2015: Section 12.10). For the climate participation processes this guide recommends, communication staff involved in enhanced hearings, panels, and sector parliament climate strands should receive specific training in deliberative process communication, including how to explain the process to the public, how to manage media engagement during a deliberative event, and how to communicate outcomes through the tracking and notification systems. This training should be integrated into the capacitation programme set out in 5.5.3.

Digital participation and AI

Digital tools carry specific potential: real-time translation across official languages, automated analysis of large volumes of stakeholder input, and systematic tracking through the feedback cycle (McKinney, 2024). AI-assisted database management, translation, transcription of multilingual deliberation, and automated feedback tracking were presented to parliamentary staff during the 24 March consultation as achievable within existing ICT capacity.

Digital tools can also reproduce exclusion. Many South Africans have limited, expensive, or slow access; women are less likely to own digital devices; and digital skills vary substantially (People Powered, 2025). The Framework itself acknowledges this, requiring institutions to strive to reach citizens whose access to technology may be limited or who prefer more traditional means such as print or interpersonal communication (Speakers' Forum, 2015: Section 12.7). Significant outreach and hybrid in-person support must accompany any digital component.

The guide treats AI as an operational support tool assisting with translation, data management, and tracking. The deliberative process itself, the engagement between participants, the weighing of evidence, and the development of recommendations, must remain a human process. McKinney (2024) cautions against AI bias, hallucination, and excessive machine influence. ICT requirements and protocols, including data protection, accessibility standards, and the boundary between AI-assisted operations and human-centred deliberation, should be specified as part of the pilot design process.

5.6.4 Budget framework

Table 5.3: Indicative budget headings for deliberative participation processes

Budget category	Description
Project design, management, and governance	Process design; stewarding board or advisory group; stakeholder engagement; background research; materials development
Recruitment and selection	Recruitment methodology; distribution of invitations through the stakeholder database; managed selection of participating organisations
Facilitation and process delivery	Team of facilitators (one per six to eight participants); lead facilitator for overall process design
Expert input and learning materials	Identification and briefing of expert speakers; accessible, multilingual briefing materials; video and visual materials where literacy constraints apply
Participant travel, accommodation, and subsistence	Direct costs of participation to remove financial barriers
Accessibility and inclusion support	Interpretation across official languages; childcare; disability access; hybrid participation infrastructure
Venue, catering, and audiovisual equipment	Suitable venue; catering; hearing loops, braille, interpretation equipment, broadcast infrastructure
Digital platforms and IT	Stakeholder portal maintenance; online submission and feedback infrastructure; AI-assisted translation and tracking tools
Communication, media, and documentation	Communication strategy; media briefings; community radio; social media; participant support; documentation
Reporting	Report of recommendations; ongoing liaison with participants; publication on the stakeholder portal

Budget category	Description
Evaluation and audit	Independent process evaluation; budget audit; lessons learned documentation

Pilot processes funded through existing committee research and participation budgets, supplemented by WFD or partner support. The pilot evaluation produces a costed model informing the budget case for institutionalisation.

5.7 Phased implementation pathway

The options are sequenced incrementally. Phase 1 strengthens the parliamentary ecosystem's capacity to deliberate on climate, through the standing climate agenda item, cross-portfolio coordination, and the initial capacitation programme. Phase 2 enhances Parliament's public participation and citizen deliberation programmes on climate, through the enhanced hearing pilot, climate content in sector parliaments, climate content in Taking Parliament to the People, and the citizens' and civil society panel pilot. Phase 3 embeds the Phase 2 options in standing procedures where the pilots have demonstrated value. For each phase, the pathway distinguishes political decisions requiring leadership authorisation from administrative actions the parliamentary service implements once authorised.

Phase 1: Strengthening parliamentary ecosystem capacity (current parliamentary term)

Table 5.4: Phased implementation pathway

Political leadership decisions	Parliamentary service actions
Standing climate agenda item: Committee of Chairpersons resolution or Speaker directive (5.2.1)	KIS prepares portfolio-specific climate question frameworks
Cross-portfolio coordination resolution: Committee of Chairpersons designates lead committee, requires annual reporting (5.2.2, Model 1)	Public Participation Section begins database consolidation, building on portal pilot (5.5.2)
NCOP directives: Chairperson issues parallel directives with provincial compliance tracking	KIS develops capacitation programme (5.5.3)

Phase 2: Enhancing public participation and citizen deliberation programmes (12 to 24 months)

Political leadership decisions	Parliamentary service actions
Enhanced hearing pilot approved (5.2.3)	Enhanced hearing pilot designed and delivered with deliberative methodology, evidence cycle, and portal (5.2.3)
Climate mainstreaming in one sector parliament cycle approved (5.3.1)	Sector parliament climate strand delivered with managed selection and facilitated deliberation (5.3.1)
Speakers' Forum adopts climate as sector-wide priority (5.4.1)	TPTTP climate session in a climate-affected province connected to Provincial Forum status (5.3.1)
Panel pilot approved (5.2.4)	Tracking system designed and piloted (5.5.2)
	Panel pilot delivered with stewarding board, managed selection, evidence programme, and response protocol (5.2.4)
	SAPI and LSS deliver provincial capacity support (5.5.3)

Phase 3: Institutionalising through standing procedures (24 to 48 months)

Political leadership decisions	Parliamentary service actions
Rules Committee develops cross-cutting committee proposal; National Assembly adopts (5.2.2, Model 2)	Tracking system fully operational; compliance metric in annual committee performance assessment (5.5.2)
Standing procedures adopted requiring documented committee consideration of tracked recommendations (5.5.2)	Auditor-General incorporates climate in audit mandate; SCOPA includes climate in expenditure oversight (5.2.2)

Political leadership decisions	Parliamentary service actions
Panel mechanism embedded in standing procedures if pilot demonstrates value (5.2.4)	Database fully operational across all committees and programmes (5.5.2)
Dedicated climate sector parliament established if mainstreaming demonstrates appetite (5.3.1)	Capacitation updated annually; Public Participation Section builds in-house facilitation capacity (5.5.3)

Legacy and continuity

The 7th Parliament's Legacy Report documents the climate oversight commitments. Standing orders, where adopted, provide the stronger permanence device. The combination of legacy reports and standing orders is the strategy through which these recommendations outlast the parliamentary term in which they are initiated.

Conclusion

South Africa's Parliament possesses a constitutional mandate, an institutional framework, and a depth of citizen engagement experience that exceeds the starting position of many of the jurisdictions whose deliberative innovations this guide has drawn upon. The challenge is not to create participation where none exists. It is to move from participation that is extensive in its reach to participation that is deliberative in its quality, closing the gap between what the Public Participation Framework envisages at Level 4 and what the parliamentary system currently delivers.

What this guide proposes, an integrated tracking system with identifiers for each recommendation, formal committee referral, published feedback on status, and a consolidated stakeholder portal as the delivery infrastructure, would, if implemented, constitute one of the first systematic attempts in any parliamentary jurisdiction to close the accountability loop between citizen participation and institutional action at an operational level.

The implementation pathway is incremental: it begins with what can be done now, through administrative action within the current parliamentary term, and builds toward the procedural changes that embed the guide's recommendations in the permanent institutional framework of the legislative sector. No parliamentary system in the evidence base has yet closed this accountability loop. South Africa, building on its own constitutional foundations, its own institutional instruments, and its own extensive experience of citizen engagement at scale, is well positioned to be among the first to do so.

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Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) is the UK public body dedicated to supporting democracy around the world. Operating internationally, WFD works with parliaments, political parties, and civil society groups as well as on elections to help make political systems fairer, more inclusive and accountable.



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