**Video interview: Dr Alisha Ali**

**Transcript**

This interview was conducted by the Knowledge Exchange Unit in Summer 2021.

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**Please introduce yourself and tell us how you engaged with the UK Parliament.**

So my name is Alisha Ali, I am an Associate Professor in Hospitality and Tourism Management, and Principal Lecturer, and I’m also the Research and Innovation Portfolio Lead for the Department of Service Sector Management at Sheffield Hallam University. So my engagement with Parliament was that I wrote evidence for the Environmental Audit Committee. They had a call out for evidence on sustainable tourism and I wrote evidence relating to my field of research which is ICT for sustainable tourism when they had that call out. After that call I also applied for a POST fellowship, because that gave me, because that gave me the sort of incentive, once my evidence was published to probably see how much more I can engage with Parliament after that.

**How did you find out about the opportunity to engage with Parliament?**

I got an email from our research office about, a few years ago actually, about an event being hosted at Parliament about encouraging more women to become involved in Parliament. And it was an all-day workshop and I looked at the aims and objectives and I thought, do you know what, this is actually for me, because I want to see how my research can create more impact and actually influence policy, so I signed up and luckily I was able to get a space on that programme and that was my sort of first engagement with Parliament. And at that event I learned a lot, which obviously encouraged me to submit the written evidence because I found a call that day which I can actually contribute to which was really exciting. But also what it did was I sat next to two other wonderful women, and we actually now are in a network together, we formed a WhatsApp group from that event and we actually keep in touch, even though our areas of research are very different, we still keep in touch, we motivate each other, you know, we share common stresses but also challenges but also successes and it’s been really nice to have this new peer group which has formed as a result of just attending that event on that day. That was like a really nice added benefit which I didn’t even realise would happen as a result of attending that event.

**How did you feel about engaging with Parliament before you got involved, and, did that changed after you engaged with Parliament as well?**

Yeah, I never thought my research would be relevant to Parliament at all, I couldn’t even think that, you know, I can contribute to policy with my research, so therefore going to that event really opened my eyes to the opportunities and things I can become more involved with. But also listening to the other women speak at the event and seeing how their research can actually create impact was really powerful so therefore that motivated me to actually, you know, get going in terms of how I engage with Parliament, so it’s been quite beneficial. Now I follow the Knowledge Exchange Unit on Twitter to see what’s happening, I keep my eye out for new calls, I keep an eye out on the All Party working groups to see if there is anything I can contribute to. So it sort of, pushed me to sort of be broader in terms of where I can actually make a contribution and an impact.

**What impact did your engagement have for you, as a researcher and as an individual as well?**

I think confidence, it’s really improved my confidence in terms of where my research can have impact. I think it also forced me to sharpen my writing style, because writing for Parliament is very different to writing for an academic paper, and you need to make sure, you know, you have those points very clearly on top in terms of what is the impact going to be, and I think it was really useful in terms of really helping me to think about, you know, what is the problem that I’m trying to solve, and how am I going to solve it and what is the impact going to be. So I think that was quite useful in terms of when you write it for Parliament, the way you write actually helps sharpen your writing skills as an academic. It also allowed me to share my research with a wider audience beyond the academic community and that has been really good for me because I’m trying to now share broader beyond the academic community so it’s given me that incentive to do that and that’s really good for engagement. And it’s also, you know, given me I would say the impetus to sort of continue to research in an area I’m passionate about because I see that the area is very significant for Parliament, you know, sustainable tourism, our tourism industry, hospitality and tourism, which, you know, is critical for our economy, and therefore you know, I could have an impact in terms of the direction of that if I continue to share my research – it’s been really useful from those perspectives and for me personally.