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Sustainable
Development Commission

Planning & Designing Engagement Processes

A full SDC guide: Stages 1-4

Planning & Designing Engagement Processes:

An SDC guide

Contents:

Introduction	- Why engagement?	p 3
Quick guide	- A summary of the key steps in planning and designing effective engagement	p 4
Stage 1	- Broad brush assessment at the beginning of a project on how much engagement to do	p 5
Stage 2	- Why do you need to work with others?	p 11
Stage 3	- Who do you need to engage? (stakeholder analysis)	p 19
Stage 4	- Planning the engagement process	p 26
Appendices	- Samples processes, Definitions, Typologies	P 31

Introduction

What is the relevance of engagement to sustainable development?

If we are to create a strong, healthy and just society that exists within environmental limits we need to tackle the complex and intractable issues that sit at the top of the political agenda - climate change being an obvious and pressing example.

It's clear, however, that Government cannot afford to rely on traditional approaches to decision-making to engender the understanding and commitment for the action we require. The SDC believes that there is a growing imperative for a new model of engagement between government, stakeholders and the public, which creates a space for constructive debate and collective decision-making: encompassing 'whole systems' thinking, acknowledging scientific complexity and recognising the potentially difficult trade-offs between competing needs.

It is only through this bolder and more systematic approach to engagement in decision-making that society can mobilise itself to tackle the critical challenges we face (frankly and openly) and achieve sustainable development.

What is the guidance for?

The guidance has been developed to support SDC staff and government officials to embed engagement in their work. Each stage is designed to take you through a step-by-step process to think more systematically about why, who and how to engage with people (public and stakeholders) more effectively to inform our work and help deliver sustainable development.

How to use this guidance

You'll get the most out of this guidance if you actually write down your answers and ideas for each question/section. This way the guidance becomes a practical resource to help you begin to shape your engagement process.

Quick guide – a summary of the key steps in planning and designing effective engagement

As an absolute minimum you should consider all of the questions below before you embark any form of engagement. Ideally, you should work through stages 1-3 to plan and design an engagement process properly.

1. **What** do you want to do?

- Why are we interested in this issue/policy (what's the problem)?
- What do we want to achieve?
- What boundaries or parameters limit what can be done?
- What specific considerations from a SDC point of view need to be borne in mind?
- What is the timescale (what would be nice and what's the bottom line)?

2. **Why** do you need to work with others (stakeholders / public)?

- What do we want to achieve by working with others (and why might they want to work with us)?
- What can or can't be influenced by our work with others?
- In what role will the SDC be working with others?
- What socio-political, cultural, historical issues do we need to bear in mind?
- What types of engagement might be appropriate?

3. **Who** do you need to involve?

- What are the kinds or categories of stakeholders relevant to this work?
- What is your long list of stakeholders?
- How will you refine your stakeholder list?
- What are the interests of each of the stakeholders and how might they want to be engaged with (e.g. consulted, involved, partnered, etc)?

Stage 1 – Broad brush assessment at the beginning of a project on how much engagement to do

Before you begin to go through this guidance you need to have done a project brief to clarify what your project is aiming to achieve.

If you're not completely clear about what you're trying to do, you won't be able to answer the questions in this guidance properly and will risk using the wrong approach.

This could mean that you fail to achieve your outcome by damaging relationships, further entrenching positions or simply closing down space for any dialogue and decision-making.

This stage outlines three broad 'types' of approaches (or engagement processes) that will help you decide how much engagement you will need to undertake:

- **Narrow** – where there is a high level of certainty/clarity around the outcome, how to achieve it and the power/autonomy to make it happen
- **Moderate** – where there is a moderate amount of uncertainty/confusion around the outcome, how to achieve it and the power/autonomy to make it happen
- **Extensive/wide-ranging** – where there is great uncertainty/confusion around the outcome, how to achieve it and little power/autonomy to make it happen

1. How much engagement is required to deliver the outcome?

You can use this framework to begin to design the engagement process and gain a better understanding of the resources required.

Fill in the blank by circling the most applicable words:

Decision Factors	Engagement Approach		
	Light touch	Moderate	Extensive
1: How affected will others be by this specific project?			
The project has ___ effect on ____	Very little	Some	Far reaching
2: Are there multiple perspectives?			
There are likely to be _____ perspectives on the issue and _____ politics	Few people	Some people	Many people
3: Do you need to involve others to achieve the project?			
The 'best' outcome is _____ and _____ we can achieve it _____	No significantly different	A number of	A wide range of
	No/containable	Some	Significant
	Known (by us)	Open to influence, but limited options	Unknown
	Alone (with or without support)	More easily if others work with us	Only with sufficient support, or only with others
4: How much uncertainty and complexity is there?			
Uncertainty and complexity around the project is ____	Low	Medium	High

5: What timescales are being worked to?			
Actions or decisions need to be made and implemented _____	Immediately/very quickly	Over months	Over years
6: What potential resources are there for engagement?	Not or a very limited (<£20K)	a moderate (£20K-£80K)	a significant (>£80K)
There is ____ amount of money available to resource and support any processes around the decision-making			

- If mostly 'narrow' is circled - characterise **light touch**
- If mostly 'moderate' is circled - characterise **moderate**
- If mostly 'extensive' is circled - characterise **extensive**

The next step is to understand what this means with respects to the type of engagement and negotiation that may be required.

2. What type of influencing strategy and engagement is required?

Narrow engagement process:

Characteristics: Low conflict/controversy/uncertainty and/or there is little control over the situation and/or decision (e.g. decided by others/procedure/few resources/crisis).

- When quick, decisive action is required e.g. unexpected influencing opportunity, emergency situation
- When unpopular actions HAVE to be taken and there are no alternative options (e.g. the SDC has a clear/strong existing position on an issue, which is unpopular with government)
- In high certainty, when the SDC is clear about its position and/or know what we want to achieve
- To stop a worse outcomes/decision (that may result)
- When there are other important issues to be dealt with other than the one under dispute (e.g. there are other priority issues that have more important outcomes at stake and/or require greater resources/attention)
- When the SDC is not sure of its competency to deal with the issue and there are other competent players to solve the problem (e.g. not our policy area/specialise so no need for us to be engaged in the debate)
- When there is more chance of disruption than of finding a solution or when status quo is to be maintained (i.e. is it a battle worth fighting?)
- To provide cooling off time

Negotiation strategy: Be clear whether you are expecting to compete (win or lose) or convince (educating others) or avoid (leave as it is) or accommodate (yield) to others.

Type of engagement: In this situation it may be appropriate to apply the 'traditional' Decide – Announce – Defend approach (i.e. make-up minds and then tell people about it and try to convince them of the value of it, including communication, education and PR campaigns). However, there is still an important opportunity to improve on standard communication practice.

Beware of: Adopting this approach by default or because it seems easier, especially when there are a range of options that could be usefully considered and influenced by other perspectives. If a narrow approach is adopted when a moderate or extensive process is more appropriate, it risks unnecessary conflict developing which can then only be rescued by a moderate or extensive approach (at greater cost due to the lost good will and further resources).

Moderately involved engagement process:

Characteristics: There is a need for buy in/understanding from a number of stakeholders (e.g. individuals, organisations, public) to ensure the decision is well informed AND to reduce risk that the outcomes of the project are not achieved resistance or opposition. Alternatively, the situation may require that there are going to have to be trade-offs and compromises:

- When the issue is technically divided and the SDC may have views, but no clear position
- When a range of parties that we want to influence are equally powerful/influential and we need to bring them together to work with to achieve the desired outcomes
- When an immediate temporary solution is required due to time pressure (or other factors) that mean a more involve process is not feasible
- When collaboration (i.e. working together closely) and competition (i.e. direct influencing) fails to work, therefore a middle way approach is needed
- When the SDC is sure that it (or another actor) has got it wrong and need to change/address this
- When issues are very important to an 'opponent' and we need to address/defuse this or bring them on side
- To build 'credits' with key stakeholders for later use
- To minimize negative impacts or risks to the SDC
- When maintaining or building the relationship is more important than the issue at hand (e.g. perhaps with certain key stakeholders)

Negotiation strategy: Compromise (split the difference) or Accommodate (both yield) or Competing (win: lose)

Type of engagement: Add time early on in the process to carefully identify the stakeholders and then to engage them in scoping the problem /issue from a range of perspectives BEFORE going on to look at solutions. Gather and use social intelligence to maximum effect. You may consider using analytical tools such as multi-criteria decision-making to assist in the process. May involve steering group at key points in the process.

Beware of: Entrenching different views too early on; being held 'to ransom' by one or two individuals.

Extensive/wide-ranging engagement process:

Characteristics: High conflict/controversy/risk and or the need for shared ownership of solution (e.g. working in partnership to fund or deliver or maintain something) or significant risk of non-delivery through opposition unless people are part of finding the solution:

- To find solutions that are integrated
- When the SDC isn't able to deal with the issue alone (e.g. because of capacity or expertise) and needs to work with other competent players to solve the problem
- When the basic objective is to learn from sharing
- To gain commitment for the implementation of the outcome/decision
- To have better understanding with the participants
- When the 'best'/optimal outcome is unknown and may be uncovered by negotiation, or, is defined as the negotiated outcome

Negotiation Strategy: Collaborating (Win/Win)

Type of engagement: A carefully planned and managed engagement process which builds ownership from the inception to the delivery of the project or programme. Processes such as the consultation deadline, stage in policy-making cycle or legislative timetable are managed within the overall engagement design which determines the timescale. Usually managed via a liaison/oversight group at the centre of the work (doing the work not consulted on it).

Beware of: Timing and transparency. This approach takes quite a while to set up (although benefits reaped later in the project). Do not use if the SDC is only open to influence from outside.

Stage 2 - Why do you need to work with others (stakeholder/public)?

2.1 Who is the final decision-maker (be specific – ministerial and/or official level) and what is their view?

- How does the wider engagement process fit into the decision-making process (timing, required outputs, receptivity/willingness of process to inform decision)?
- What is the decision-maker's interest/commitment/involvement in the process?
- Is there potential for sufficient resources and time to do the whole project (including the engagement) properly?

Right from the outset it's important to think about who the ultimate decision-maker is (e.g. Minister/Secretary of State, senior official, committee or steering group), and whether they are in support of an engagement process. Often the key decision-maker is not considered within the engagement process, but is seen as the person to whom the outputs are delivered. The decision-maker has the power to accept or reject any results (i.e. whether they have any impact or not); therefore they need to be borne in mind throughout the design of the process so they 'buy-in' to the results.

Your Answers/ideas

Note down any key issues/actions regarding the decision-maker:

2.2 What do we want to achieve by working with others (i.e. your aims for engagement)?

Think specifically about what the project is trying to achieve by working with stakeholders (NB the project may be trying to achieve more than one thing through engagement). If you can't think of anything specific don't bother to engage.

TIP: The outcomes below can form the basis of your brief – if any of them are relevant circle them and then simply re-write them in your own words, in complete sentences explaining why it's an important part of the project.

- **To achieve practical outcomes** (i.e. find out what works) - for example:
 - ensure that problems, risks, standards/criteria are scoped properly and are in line with public and stakeholder concerns
 - ensure that whole-system information and understanding is included
 - gain expert input
 - elicit values to guide the decision
 - determine interests and needs which have to be taken into account
 - empower stakeholders to take action (e.g. join oversight group, use their networks/members to engage more widely, take responsibility for delivering outputs)
 - optimise trust and credibility of the SDC and/or project
 - reconcile 'expert' and 'lay' views
 - change people's views (attitudes, behaviours or assumptions)
 - resolve conflicting views, reducing conflict and polarisation over goals/objectives and actions
 - increase commitment to agreed course of action
 - raise awareness of particular issues
 - promote away to communicate effectively, cooperation and coordination between government and other stakeholders (including the public)

- **To implement principles** (for moral or ethical reasons) - for example:
 - give particular stakeholders a voice
 - ensure equality of opportunity and influence (i.e. address imbalances in power)
 - support the democratic right of people to participate in decisions that affect their lives
 - make decision on the basis of consensus rather than majority

- **To respond to imperatives** (pressures such as funding or legislation) - for example:
 - satisfy regulatory, legal or policy requirement
 - satisfy stakeholders' (and public's) desire to have a say
 - give a process political legitimacy
 - increase defensibility (or professional judgement of decisions)
 - increase transparency

Your Answers/ideas
Note any key issues/actions in regards to the aims of engagement:

What type of support do you need from others to achieve what you're trying do?

The next thing to consider is what support (if any) you are you looking for, and how you will know if you have enough support by involving others.

- everyone to support it, a majority, quorum, key decision-makers/players etc?
- do some people's views outweigh others (e.g. key decision makers, more affected/impacted, etc)?

Tip: It might be useful to think about how this relates to different stakeholders

Your Answers/ideas
Note down any key issues/actions in regards to support:

2.3 What's in it for others to work with the SDC?

Thinking about what a stakeholder might want from the process is a good way to look at the issue beyond the SDC's perspective. This will help to encourage a whole-systems thinking approach, provide a clear 'sales pitch' to stakeholders about why they might want to get involved and lead to a better designed /more appropriate process.

Be aware that at this stage some of your answers may be a 'best guess'. However this is a good indication that you might need to go away and ask more questions (particularly of potential stakeholders).

- What's in it for them – put yourself in their shoes?
- What might they lose by work with us?
- Why might they not want to work with us (e.g. not enough time)?
- What might they be nervous or hesitant to share?

Your Answers/ideas

Note down any key issues/actions in regards to stakeholders' aims:

2.4 What types of engagement might be appropriate?

Reflecting on your answers to questions 1 and 2, what level or type of engagement is needed to deliver the outcomes you are seeking?

Be aware of how you are engaging everyone. You may need to engage different people/groups in different ways. For example, if the project involves stakeholders in a partnership, by its very nature it will include elements of informing, consulting and involving in order to achieve the higher levels of engagement.

And be realistic (and honest); is it possible to deliver changes in views or resolve conflict through a consultation approach?



- **inform** – to provide stakeholders with balances and objective information to help them in understanding a problem, alternative, opportunities and/or solutions.
- **consult** – to gain feedback from stakeholders on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions
- **involve** – to work directly with stakeholders throughout the process to ensure that their concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered
- **partnership/collaborate** – to partner with stakeholders in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solutions
- **empower** – to place the final decision-making in the hands of all stakeholders

So what does this mean?

Note down any key issues/actions in regards to types of engagement:

2.5 In relation to the wider stakeholder/public context - what socio-political, cultural, historical issues do we need to bear in mind?

- ***How does the issue fit in the bigger picture?***
 - How will any engagement process tie-in with other work programmes (SDC's and partnership organisations)?
 - How will it fit with external political decisions and events that are on the horizon (e.g. new international regulations, departmental announcements etc.)?
- ***What is the profile and interest in the issue?***
 - How likely is the project/issue to cause high concern and/or significant interest? How might you mitigate this?
 - Is there likely to be a wide or narrow range of different views within that interest?
- ***What are the dynamics of the relationships?***
 - How do various stakeholders view/trust the SDC (on this or generally)? And what action can you take to do about this?
 - What influence do stakeholders have? To what extent do 'key players' (e.g. politicians, senior civil servants, public and private organisations) influence the behaviour of others and how do they do this (e.g. through political alliances, strong lobbying power, representation of a large/vocal constituency)? What other influencing routes are ways in?
 - To what extent do any different interests or groups trust each other?
 - Are there any historical issues or relationships to take into consideration?
 - Have there been any previous engagement processes on the same project or issues and what were the outcomes and/or lessons (e.g. conflict, agreement, actions, decisions)?
- ***Who are the potentially strong and weak voices?***
 - Who are the particularly strong voices that might dominate?
 - Who are the weaker voices that might need drawing out? Who may not be confident or interested? Who may have difficulties putting in time or speaking out?
 - Who are the people who need most influence on the decision (e.g. those most directly affected)?
- ***Who are the potential supports and blockers?***
 - Which stakeholders (e.g. parts of society)
 - What do we know about view/opinions on the issue?
- ***What level of experience/understanding of the content are we going to be working with? Think from the following perspectives:***

- SDC's
- Stakeholders' (including different groups of stakeholders)
- Wider world's (e.g. public, media)
- ***What other socio-political issues need to be considered?***
- Economic, language, age and ethnic profile (in very approximate terms) of the stakeholders (or those directly impacted on)
- Rural or urban differences
- Anything site specific
- Broad cultural issues
- Devolution issues (UK, regional, local, DA)

So what does this mean?

Note down any key issues/actions in regards to context:

2.6 What are the risks of working with others (to the SDC and stakeholders)?

Good risk management ensures that all potential risks are considered from the start. The key risk for engagement processes are:

- Reputation – everyone involved in the engagement process is placing their reputation at risk, whether in the design, implementation, outputs and outcomes of the process.
- Lack of willingness to participate – the willingness to get involved or abide by the results may not be there.
- Resources – engagement processes cost money , take time and require skilled professionals
- Manipulation – that some stakeholder may attempt to manipulate the process to serve their own purposes
- Failure to deliver on what was promised – even where the desired outcomes seem clearly defined from the outset, decision-makers may refuse to accept the outcomes
- Relationships – a poorly run process can damage relationships between all of those involved. Although engagement processes can have beneficial impacts (e.g. increasing social capacity), if they are designed badly processes can damage relationships and undermine confidence
- Outcomes are discredited

However, all of these have to be balanced against the risk of not engaging (when there is a compelling case to do so), which may lead to unnecessary conflict, greater cost due to lost of good will, delay due to resistance and the money that comes with this.

So what does this mean?

Note down any key issues/actions in regards to risks:

Stage 3 – Who do you need to engage?

This section outlines a step-by-step guide to determine *who* you need to engage and *how* you might engage them in your engagement process.

Tip: If you just want to get and do a stakeholder analysis go straight to **section 3.4 – How do I do a stakeholder analysis?**

3.1 What is a ‘stakeholder’?

The word stakeholder is misused a lot. In this guide we refer to ‘stakeholders’ to cover the following:

- **Identified interests** - those who feel they have a stake in the issue, either because they are affected by or can have an effect on a decision. They may be individuals or represent an organisation
- **Citizens** - the wider public/society who may have a right and interest to be engaged, although they might not know it (yet!). Citizenship is a political act, with people taking responsibility on behalf of the wider society (e.g. citizen panels)
- **Communities** may be defined by identity (e.g. minority ethnic or religion), but in terms of engagement communities are most often defined geographically (e.g. neighbourhood or village)
- **Consumers (or users)** are people who use products and services. They are well-established in the private sector and have an increasingly important role in the delivery and design of public services

You will find within each of these broader categories:

- **Professionals** – public, private and third sector organisations with staff who represent them
- **Local groups** – non-professional organised groups whose members come together because they have a common interest, are united through attachment to a particular place, or identify with each other through a common characteristic such as gender or ethnicity
- **Local public** – individual citizens

3.2 Why do a stakeholder analysis?

The large amount of evidence about what makes project/initiatives/policies successful suggests that not enough attention is paid to **who** we need to engage in any given project, **why** we need to engage them and **when**.

A stakeholder analysis makes sure that you **systematically** (and more objectively) consider an **appropriate** range of interests in your project and give people the right opportunities to get involved. It also helps you decide **when** you will need to engage people and recognise that different interest groups will be involved in different **ways** at different **times**.

Doing a stakeholder analysis helps to reduce the risk of missing out people who could be key to your work. This is part of a *precautionary approach*.

3.3 How should I use the results?

Capture all of the information you get from thinking about who to work with into a table. This will help you to develop an '**initial engagement plan**' which sets out how and when you approach each person/group. Both **how** and **when** may be different for different interested groups.

You will then be able to develop a broad outline of the **methods/techniques** you plan to use for working with this group (e.g. you may have public meetings, a newsletter, a liaison group, task groups).

You can then '**test**' these ideas i.e. who, when and how to engage others – as part of your initial contact with stakeholders. However, once you have contacted the people you want to work with, you should turn this table into a database of live information, recording **their views** of:

- How they want to work with you
- Main contact (for them and for you)
- Contact details
- Preferred way of communicating with them (e.g. email, hard copy)
- What they are/have been involved in (e.g. the partnership, public meeting, task group)
- What they are interested in (e.g. if there are particular issues that they are concerned about)

This provides the basis for setting up how you are going to work with others as part of your project.

3.4 How do I do a stakeholder analysis?

Summary of steps:

- Broad scoping
- Think about interesting groups of stakeholders for your project
- Start to divide your stakeholders into interested groups
- Think about how to engage others

Tips:

- Think as broadly and laterally as you can. Try not to work just with those stakeholders you already know or are comfortable with.
- Do this right at the start of planning how you will work with others – once you are clear why you are doing the work and why you are involving others.
- Don't do this alone – work with others (internal and external) to complete the analysis.
- Set aside some time and space to do it justice
- You may find it helpful to put each stakeholder on a separate post-it, which you can move around as you work through the analysis
- Think of a way that works for you to capture the information throughout the process (e.g. take pictures of the groupings, record on flipchart or spreadsheet, etc)

Step 1 - Broad scoping: getting the names on the table

Start by writing the names of each stakeholder (individual or group) you need to work with on a post-it note.

Be specific when you're doing this – if there are particular individuals, departments, roles within an organisation write them down separately. For example, it is better to enter the name of 5 officials from 2 divisions within a department plus that Director General with overarching policy responsibility, than just department X.

Step 2 – Going beyond the usual suspects

Identifying interested group

To make sure that you don't miss anyone out, it's useful to think through who you want to work with using a number of different groupings. Identify which interested groups are relevant to your project. Each group of people is useful for different reasons and this will vary from project to project.

Start to assign your stakeholders to different interest groups - move the post-it notes around on flipchart paper to sit under different category headings/groups. This is a very practical way of finding out those people that are particularly important, as you will need to write them on several post-it notes, to sit within different categories/groups.

Useful ways to divide interested groups are by:

- Level of governance – e.g. international (global/EU) national, regional, sub-regional or local
- Sector – e.g. public, private, third/voluntary, community, academic/educational, media
- Function – e.g. user, service provider, service commissioner, regulator, decision-maker, resource holder
- Geography – e.g. living within postal district or in affected area, rural/urban
- Socio-economic – e.g. income, gender, age, length of time living in areas
- Impact – e.g. directly/indirectly affected
- Understanding/experience of topic – e.g. none, low, medium, high
- Known or likely position – e.g. for or against project/policy in question
- Thematic interest – e.g. social, economic, environmental

However, there may be other interested groups not listed here that are more relevant to your project.

Groups that need special attention

It's also useful to think about groups who need special attention or may be hard to reach or engage with (from senior civil servants and ministers to socially excluded groups):

- Who may have a particularly loud voice or influence? The reasons may be that they are high profile, well connected, trusted, particularly well informed, politically influential, a lot of time/resources to take part, effective campaigners, already active on this issue, have personal relationship or vendettas.
- Conversely, who may have some of these attributes (e.g. high profile, well connect, trusted, politically influential), but is not interested in or aware of the issue?
- Who may not have a voice unless you pay special attention so they can be heard? The reasons may be that they don't understand why it is relevant to them, socially excluded (e.g. because of language, mobility, money, cultural, time, confidence), distrustful of your organisation or of institutions/government/society generally, don't believe they can make a

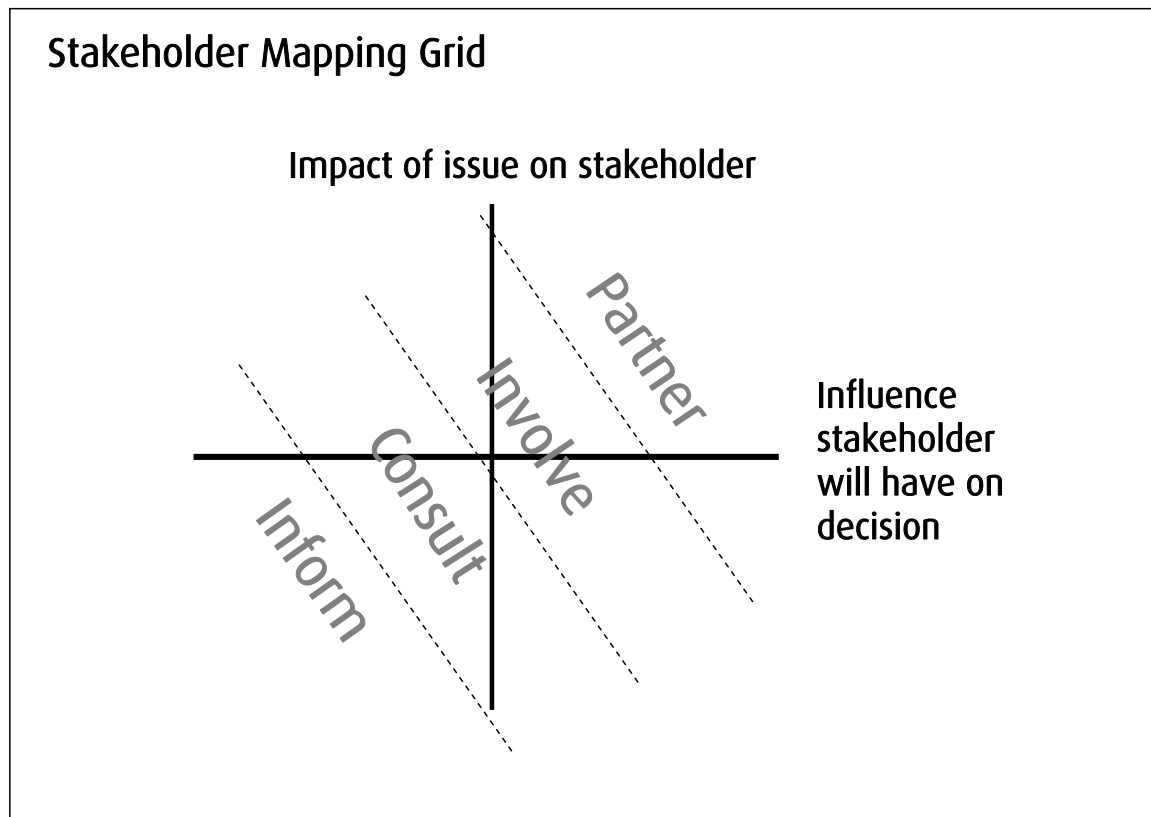
difference, can't access meetings, email, have had negative experiences in the past

Step 3 - Thinking about how to engage others

The level you need to engage

Interested groups themselves will decide how they want to get involved. But to help you start to think about how you might work with them it is useful to consider how you think people and organisations might like to work with you.

A useful way of thinking about how you might work with stakeholders (especially to identify core/key stakeholders) is by thinking about what level of importance the issue has to them (i.e. how much impact it will have on them) and the level of influence they will have on the decision. You can do this by plotting them on a grid below.



You'll notice that the grid relates back to questions about the level of engagement outlined in Stage 1 (why to engage others) and is a useful way to cross-check your thinking (and challenge any previous assumptions) about how to engage others. Depending on where your stakeholders are positioned on the grid the types of engagement you might have with them are:

- **Decide together (or partnering)** – those that you share responsibility for reaching the final decision with because they have got the relevant authority/responsibility. Without their full agreement, you cannot make a decision.
Methods: liaison group and formal decision-making
- **Involve** – those regularly involved because although you could make a decision without their full agreement (i.e. they are not a decision-sharing partner), their ongoing influence will be critical to helping you make informed, lasting and acceptable decisions.
Methods: liaison group and/or working or task group
- **Gather information (or consult)** – those whose views and concerns you would like to know (as the organising body) before you make a decision. These interested groups would probably say that they are not interested or confident enough in the issue, or to spend the time and resources needed to be involved on an ongoing basis.
Methods: 1:1 meetings, targeted surveys, informal work, personalised (e.g. face-to-face) contact and invitations to attend meetings, exhibitions, encouraging one-off input into 'bits' of work e.g. task groups, put on a newsletter circulation, hold a database.
- **Inform** – those people that you will inform about the project and will be open to receive their views and concerns. They need to know how things are developing and how and when to give their views if they want to.
Methods: hold a database, leaflet drop, press/media work, posters, general invitations to events, website, newsletters.
- **Statutory consultee** – those people that you have to consult legally. They may also be suitable for any of the ways listed above of getting involved.
Methods: formal written consultation following Government's Code of Practice.

Your approach to engagement

Think about which of the following ways of engaging with others are most like to help you meet your goals?

- **Broad brush engagement of the public**
 - Gives everyone a chance to get involved¹ i.e. open/inclusive (e.g. everyone living in areas X)
 - Involves a representative sample i.e. selective (e.g. to reflect the local/regional/national population)
- **Structured engagement of interested groups**
 - Engage community representatives (e.g. councillors, group representatives/spokespeople)

¹ Note: Just leaving it 'open' to anyone who wants to get involved, without thinking more carefully about who you particularly need, will often mean that you get the 'usual' people turning up.

- Engage professionals / experts only (e.g. statutory consultees)
- Engage specific views, groups or individuals (e.g. socially excluded/hard to reach, those affected by the issue, service users)

You will probably want to use a combination of the above ways to engage people. For example, give everyone interested in the issue chance to get involved, but pay particular attention to specific groups who are very affected, but would probably not get involved in a 'traditional' process.

Stage 4: Planning the engagement process

This is the creative stage of designing your engagement process. You'll need to put in front of you all the work done to date from Stages 1, 2 and 3. It is now that you ask yourself:

“What needs to happen to get those stakeholders engaged in a way that will deliver the project aims, bearing in mind all the context and boundaries?”

4.1 What values (or principles) will guide your approach?

Before you begin to think about the process itself, it's helpful to agree a set of values (or principles) that will underpin the way you want to engage in order to provide clarity about your approach. These principles can be used to explain your decision about the stage in the project you'll start to engage others (e.g. from the start, consult on option, etc).

Some examples from actual engagement processes are:

From Newborough Forest & Warren engagement programme, Countryside Council for Wales/Forestry Commission 2003:

- We will involve stakeholders early on in the process.
- We will respect how stakeholders themselves wish to be involved.
- We will be honest and open and will make every effort to avoid raising false expectations.
- We will be clear about what can and can't be changed. We will also be clear about what can be included during the consultation and if it can't be included we will explain why and try to refer it to someone who can help.
- We will explain that the partnership makes the decisions but takes on board all views and concerns. We will use involvement techniques that encourage all stakeholders to give their views. We will look for value in all contributions.
- We will look for win : win outcomes but recognise that some difficult decisions may need to be made.
- We will provide feedback, including clear explanations on how decisions have been made, why and how concerns have been taken into account.

From Flood Risk in Shaldon Design Workshop, Environment Agency 2005:

- Adopt a precautionary approach: engage as openly, inclusively and early as possible (and reduce intensity later if appropriate)
- Clarify the need (i.e. that flood risk is sufficient to justify action) before moving to consider the range of possible solutions before working up preferred way forward
- The Environment Agency is part of engagement process/decision-making: deliberative approach rather than consultation

4.2 Deciding the phases of your process

This is where you start to sketch out what the overall engagement process will look like. Use the phases set out in the table below as a guide – but it's important to recognise that you might be starting your project (and therefore engagement process) at a different stage (e.g. there is general agreement about the problem and the project is about generating options and solutions).

As you go through the table give a clear purpose for each phase and then think about the kinds of techniques you could use to achieve it (NB it's not about reaching a final decision or getting into the detail). It is important to try to map these phase against a timeline (e.g. to integrate correctly into a legislative process).

Tips

- It can help to give a title or heading to each of the phases (left hand column). This should be specific to your process, and explain the *purpose* of this phase. It should be the kind of language you could put into a press release or use in a presentation explaining your engagement process to stakeholders.
- The right hand column is your second opportunity (the first comes during step 3, stakeholder analysis) to do some broad thinking about 'how' and 'who'. You are not filling in the detail at this stage, just seeing whether obvious, simple answers spring immediately to mind and jotting them down.
- It is useful to do this exercise with at least one other person, using a flip chart sheet for each phase, so you can iterate around the phases, seeing how each impacts on the others.
- Start by filling in your thoughts for the left hand column to get the bare bones of what the process might look like (i.e. the broad purpose of each phase), then move onto the next column to complete the detail (i.e. the kinds of thing you might do to deliver each phase).

Possible Phase – what specifically are you trying to achieve (write it as a complete sentence)?		What kinds of things might you do in this phase and who should be involved?	
1. Understanding and getting buy-in to the issue/need Purpose:	For example, buy-in to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the need that something must change the 'science' or evidence perceptions about the current situation 	Who:	How:
2. Collate the results and publicise (e.g. who needs to know?) Purpose:	Answer any questions, undertake research, advice, fact-finding to reduce any uncertainties that come out of phase 1.	Who:	How:
3. Generate and explore long list of solutions or options Purpose:	For example, this may include the vision or strategic direction	Who:	How:
4. Reduce any uncertainties or fill gaps in information Purpose:	Gather information from specific groups, take people to visit 'other sites', do impact assessments on a number of options, get or clarify resources available.	Who:	How:
5. Evaluate options Purpose:	Once you have all of the option you need to evaluate which is the best option and decide what will go ahead	Who:	How:
6. Communicate decision Purpose:	Explain the choice that has been made against the feedback/input you've had and outline how you have/haven't taken this into account	Who:	How:
7. Implement and review Purpose:	Move into the delivery implementation phase of the project and review against your measures of success	Who:	How:

4.3 Building in the detail - what techniques will you use?

Use the information in this section to start building in the detail around how you'll engage with your stakeholders (i.e. developing the information from the table in the previous section 4.2). It's helpful to think about two distinct (but strongly linked) categories around 'how' to engage. Both can be described as 'techniques', but they are different:

- Structures (or spaces) – where the engagement is ongoing and done through a named group of some kind. They will be aware of or know each other.
- One-off engagement techniques – where stakeholders are brought together once or twice, with no sense of being 'in' a group.

What structures might you want to use to bring stakeholders together?

For most engagement process you will need to establish ongoing structures. Examples of structures include:

Space or group in which involvement can take place	With whom, when and for what
1:1 meetings	With individuals or groups to gather information, establish trust
Partnership or core dialogue group	With key decision-makers, from start of process, sharing decisions
Advisory/steering group	'Involved' stakeholders, early in process, informing decisions
Liaison group	As above, but with specific responsibility for linking to particular interests
Working groups	On specific issues, areas or people (as subset of a liaison group)
Joint fact finding groups (or visits)	To reduce uncertainties (as subset of a liaison group)
Open/invite only forums	At key stages in the project, with wider community and others
Mailing lists	For those expressing an interest, throughout, to keep them updated
Focus group	Selected people/interests, testing values, reactions

What techniques might you want to use with that space or group?

As well as establishing structures, you will need to choose techniques that are appropriate for the tasks, structures, timescale and stakeholders you're going to work with. For example:

Giving information	Getting information from people (individually)	Interactive or deliberative involvement (from people working together)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentations at 'their' meeting or group • Exhibitions or road shows • Visits and exchanges • Drop ins • Talks or presentations • Newsletters • Websites • Adverts, posters • Press/media releases • Word of mouth, or peer information networks • Viral methods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation documents with request for comments • Questionnaires or flip charts (for example at a drop in, road show or exhibition) • Maps with comment flags (e.g. at exhibition or drop in) • Surveys (door to door, street, telephone, at a particular event) • One: one interviews • Video booths/vox pops • Websites • Use of existing information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tailor made discussions such as at facilitated conferences and workshops, including public meetings • Off the shelf involvement techniques: citizens juries, future search conferences, Open space technology, planning for real, design weekends, citizen summits, • Web based discussion fora • Analytic methods such as multi-criteria mapping • Ongoing in depth dialogue (e.g. using strategic planning techniques)

4.5 Pulling it all together to create an engagement plan and process diagram

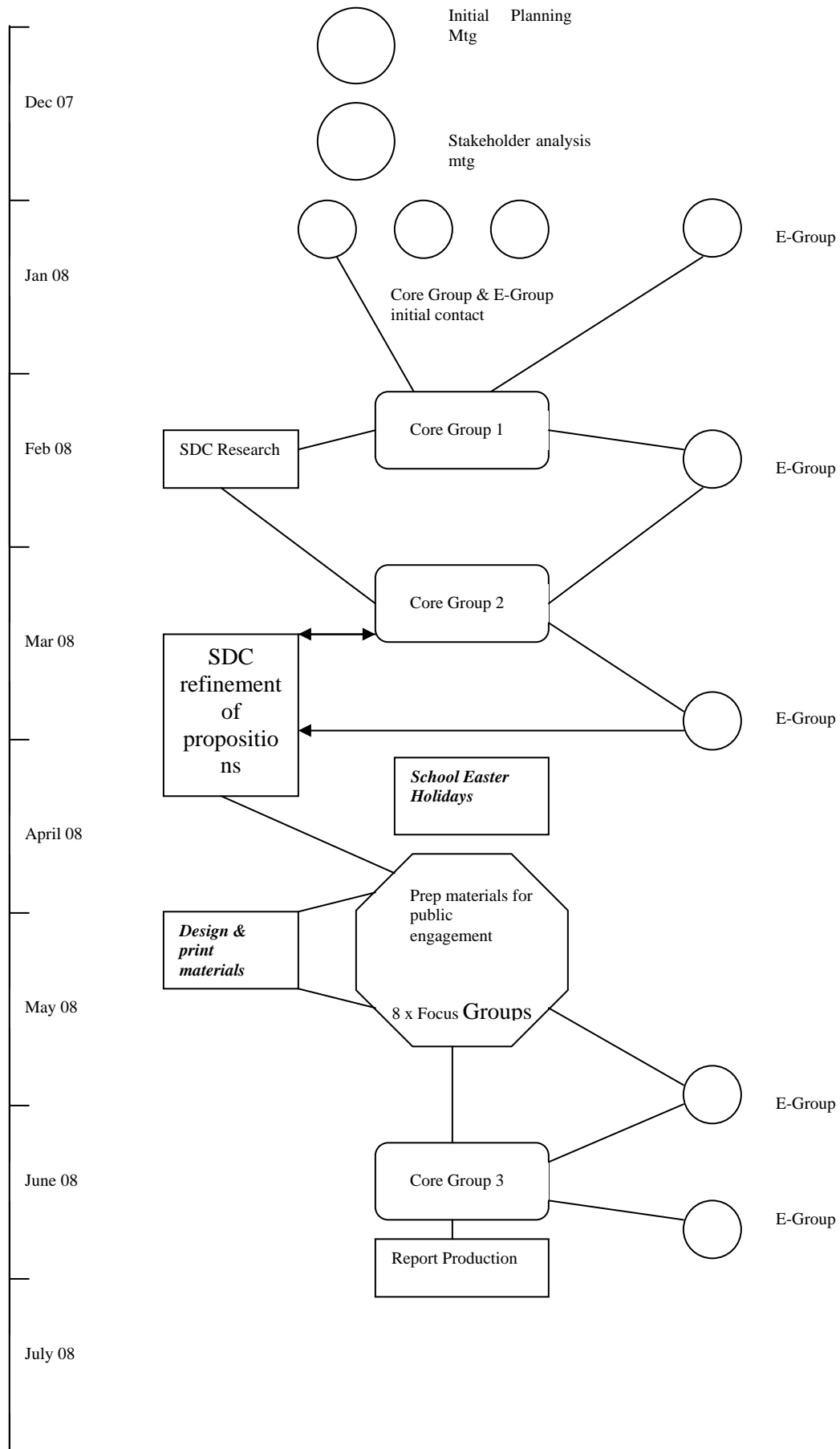
In order that you and your stakeholders understand your plan for the engagement process, you need to find a way of representing (in words or in a diagram or table) how your engagement process will work – it's up to you to use a format that works best for you and the situation/project. You may prefer to begin with an Initial Engagement Plan that sets out what the very first steps will be with regards to specific stakeholders (e.g. which groups needs to be engaged in what form by when). Examples of a process diagram and engagement plan are provided below.

Extract sample INITIAL engagement plan	
[Sets out what very first steps of engagement will be in relation to named stakeholder groupings]	
Stakeholder - defining characteristics	INITIAL engagement approach
People/organisations, who, once they know about [process], are likely to be interested and heavily involved; may become partners.	Personal contact / phone calls / face to face meetings (this may develop into partnership arrangements or to clear allocation of responsibility within this engagement process.
Statutory agencies and NGO's who need to know early on, but probably won't be very interested unless [option Z] progressed. Would be consulted automatically as part of the statutory consultation process under [legislation/guidance Y]	Letter, inviting two way dialogues. To inform the way the project progresses (this may develop into involvement in a liaison group)
People and groups who might be interested at a later stage [because of x], but at this stage, simply need to be informed and offered an opportunity to engage if they wish to do so	Mail out of letter / invites with comms and media backup. Also use of local and group newsletters, posters etc to 'get the message out'. Must ensure ALL are reached. (those most interested may wish to be involved in a liaison group as the project progresses)

Appendices: Sample Engagement Plan [example of one stakeholder within one category]

Target group	Why you are going to engage with them?	Why they want to be engaged?	What type of engagement do you want to offer them?	What you will to do engage them (method(s))?	When you will carry out each method (with dates)?	Who will lead on each task?	How will know when you have done it?
<i>Public sector [Sets out stakeholder groupings within categories – but in way that is relevant to the project - not just for sake of it]</i>							
Shaldon Parish Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We want Parish Councillors to be aware of our view of flood risk To understand their interest in flood risk and the involvement process. Get more names for our stakeholder list Include Councillors' ideas in the involvement plan To get the Parish Council's support, and nominated person on the liaison group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To understand the flood risk issues in the area To share local experience of flooding with the Environment Agency To have a say in any plans to manage flood risk in the area To find out how residents can get involved in the decision-making process 	Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One-to-one meeting with Chairman to dispel misconceptions (see minutes of last PC meeting) Visit backed up with something in writing, for example, a handout or briefing note Invite them to the public exhibition, the public meeting and to join the liaison group 	May	Area manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> They will be aware of our view of flood risk We will understand their interest in flood risk and the local experience / knowledge of local flood issues We will know how they want to be involved They will understand how they can be involved They will have had a chance to provide us with other people to contact They will have had the chance to have a say in the plans
					June	Work manager	
					Sept	External relations/ corporate services	

Example Process Diagram – SDC Supplier Obligation Project 2007/2008



Engagement – some terms & definitions

Overview

The world of 'engagement' is littered with words that are laden with significant meaning. Unfortunately, often people use the words and phrases to mean different things.

As all developing professional areas, the language of engagement will undoubtedly continue to develop and expand. The SDC needs to maintain some discipline about the language we use and also develop a habit of challenging others when they use terms that we do not understand, or where they seem to be used in an unfamiliar ways.

For the SDC to be effective when planning and 'doing' engagement, the following things need to be in place as an essential basic building block for any coherent organisational work on engagement:

- We must have agreement on the meaning of any significant phrase or word used to describe what we are intending, proposing or doing
- We must be consistent in our internal and external communications by using the same words to mean the same things

The terms and definitions below are taken from training resources developed for the SDC by Interact Networks.

Engagement

A useful term which can be taken to cover a whole spectrum of activities, as set out in the typology of engagement in the table below. It is useful as a generic term, rather than to describe a more specific type of engagement. All the common terms – consultation, involvement, participation, partnership, are subsets or types of 'engagement'.

Stakeholder

As with 'engagement', we find the most useful way to use this term is as a generic way of referring to anyone who has an interest or 'stake' in the subject or the engagement process under discussion - from interested agencies and organisations, to local communities and individuals.

It can be used with a pre-fix, such "key" or "primary" to describe particularly significant (influential or impacted upon) stakeholders. It is important to note that the term is being used to mean very specific things in some organisations. For example, in the Environment Agency, 'stakeholder' only means 'interested professionals and agencies', as opposed to anyone from 'the public'. This is probably true for most of those working in central government, who tend to consider the public to be distinct from 'stakeholders'.

Public

Used to describe those people and communities who are not (or not yet) directly interested or impacted by the issues being discussed, nor are they satisfactorily represented by any existing stakeholders.

For example, a national issue, such as whether or not to build new nuclear power stations, has many vociferous stakeholders. However, people outside of stakeholder groups and beyond local “nuclear communities” also have a stake although they may, individually, have chosen not to concern themselves with the issue thus far.

Deliberation

This word is often mis-used, in place of ‘dialogue’, but it has a narrower meaning. A simple, practical definition is “to discuss and think through an issue together”. It is often used to suggest a process which seeks to immerse participants in the issues and dilemmas of a topic, to varying degrees, before opinions are expressed.

The term is frequently used to describe specific types of events known as “deliberative forums” where selected citizens are given key facts about a subject and arguments, invited to discuss the issues and then asked to “vote”.

Deliberation - “Discussion and consideration of all sides of an issue.” - Online dictionary

Dialogue

Commonly used to mean a process within which interested parties come together to discuss an issue and develop a common resolution. Often working with a third party facilitator to manage the process of discussion, the work is usually explicitly about maximising common ground, and building consensus.

Dialogue is a process that allows people, usually in small groups, to share their perspectives and experiences with one another about difficult issues...Dialogue dispels stereotypes, builds trust and enables people to be open to perspectives that are very different from their own. Dialogue can, and often does, lead to both personal and collaborative action - National Coalition for Dialogue & Deliberation. USA. www.thataway.org

Type of engagement	Aim	Typical Methods	Characteristics			
			Response	Power	Frame	Resource
Inform	to provide stakeholders with balanced and objective information to help them understand a problem, alternative, opportunities and/or solutions	Letters, legal notices, press/media notices/adverts, verbal announcements, public meetings	REACTIONS	WITH INITIATOR	CLOSED	LESS
Consult / Info-Gather	to understand stakeholders' views and gain feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions	Social / market research, opinion polls, questionnaires, focus group discussions, , citizen panels, citizen juries, online and written consultations	↑	↑	↑	↑
Involve	to work directly with stakeholders to ensure concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered throughout the process	Advisory bodies, liaison groups, 1:1 relationships, deliberative workshops, web-based dialogue	OPINIONS	↑	↑	↑
Partnership / Collaborate	to partner with stakeholders in each aspect of the decision, including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solutions	Citizen advisory committees, Consensus building, Participatory decision-making, partnerships, dialogues	↑	↑	↑	↑
Empower	to place the final decision-making in the hands of all stakeholders	Citizen juries, ballots, giving grants, providing training and education	NEEDS	SHARED	OPEN	MORE

* NB the same methods may be used for different aims depending on the framing of the engagement process



Sustainable Development Commission

The Sustainable Development Commission is the Government's independent watchdog on sustainable development, reporting to the Prime Minister, the First Ministers of Scotland and Wales and the First Minister and Deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland. Through advocacy, advice and appraisal, we help put sustainable development at the heart of Government policy.

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