



WORKING TOWARDS MORE EFFECTIVE AND SUSTAINABLE  
BROWNFIELD REVITALISATION POLICIES

## STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT – A TOOLKIT

**REVIT**



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European Regional  
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Community Initiative



# FOREWORD

Stakeholder engagement and/or participatory practice is increasingly becoming a part of mainstream business practice and central to public policy decision-making and delivery.

It is being used as a means to improve communications, obtain wider community support or buy-in for projects, gather useful data and ideas, enhance public sector or corporate reputation, and provide for more sustainable decision-making.

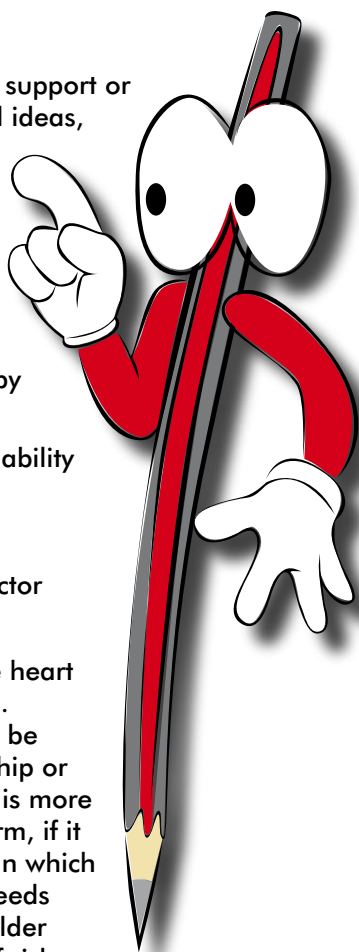
The potential spin-offs from a high-quality engagement process include:

- strengthening of democracy by encouraging more active involvement by communities and other stakeholders
- improvement in the quality and sustainability of public and private-sector services
- building greater community cohesion
- tackling complex problems in public sector service design and delivery

Stakeholder engagement should be at the heart of any “sustainable development” agenda. Without engaging stakeholders, there can be no common enduring agreement, ownership or support for a particular project. A venture is more likely to succeed, especially in the long-term, if it takes into consideration the environment in which it operates and endeavours to meet the needs of the stakeholders affected by it. Stakeholder engagement could be viewed as a form of risk management. Many projects, but not necessarily all, will need to engage with a wide range of stakeholder groups, each with their own concerns, needs, conflicts of interest and levels of influence. In order for the pieces of the project plan to be effective, planners and project managers need to understand who are the stakeholder groups, what their issues are, and what motivates them.

Yet despite the enormous growth of participatory practice and theory, there is still little shared understanding amongst those involved. Participatory practice has emerged from many disciplines and in many sectors, often quite disparate from one another. A lack of effective communication amongst these interest groups has up until recently, limited opportunities for shared learning and the development of participatory theory and practice.

This toolkit is designed to provide a set of practical guidelines on how to **plan for** and **manage** an effective Stakeholder Engagement process, and is intended to provide a “hands-on” contribution to the growing arena of participatory theory and practice.



## BACKGROUND

The need for stakeholder engagement becomes increasingly apparent the larger and more complex a project becomes. Brownfield redevelopment projects by their nature tend to fall within this category. A toolkit which provides guidance on how best to plan for, manage, implement and evaluate stakeholder engagement, could thus be a valuable management tool for brownfield regeneration projects.

The development of this toolkit has been funded through REVIT – a trans-national EU project which aims at improving the efficiency and sustainability of brownfield regeneration projects. This toolkit was drafted by Torfaen County Borough Council (TCBC) as part of the REVIT project and was evaluated and reviewed by REVIT partners and others during a three day workshop held in March 2006.

### **Relevance for Brownfield sites and beyond.....**

A critical issue to consider by those who have responsibility for the redevelopment of brownfield sites is the need to integrate the various views and opinions of stakeholders at the earliest opportunity. The attitude of the local community is important in determining the level of priority attached to the redevelopment of such sites. Involving the community in the project from the earliest planning phase can produce many benefits, and indeed bring greater sustainability to the development, by engendering a sense of ownership and involvement.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This toolkit has been developed by Claire Gray, Head of Urban Regeneration for Torfaen County Borough Council, and peer review input from European partners from the Interreg IIIB project "REVIT". Additional input has also been provided by Andrew Gray, Sarah Colvin, QUEST, Involve, and Gareth Kiddie Associates.



# INTRODUCTION

## Who are Stakeholders?

In the context of **public participation**, a stakeholder can be defined as **any person, or group**, who has an **interest in the project** or could be **potentially affected by its delivery or outputs**.

Stakeholders may be existing or potential customers or end-users of the product, employees, suppliers, shareholders, or those that define policies or have financial leverage. Those responsible for undertaking public participation often categorise stakeholders into 'groups' based on a number of factors including geographic boundaries or location, recognised bodies or institutions, income groups, land ownership or occupation, legal requirements, and real or perceived views of the issue under dispute. The nature of this classification means that these stakeholder groups are usually not homogenous entities. It is more likely in fact, that an identified "stakeholder group" will comprise a diverse mix of individuals, who may – or may not – identify themselves with the particular "stakeholder group" into which they have been categorised. This is an important issue to take into consideration when identifying who your stakeholders are. Stakeholder identification is a critical component of the initial scoping phase and should occur before the engagement plan is formulated and consultations begin.

## Levels of Participation

Before any expensive and lengthy engagement process is begun, it is important to have a good understanding, and indeed consider what level of participation is actually being sought. Public participation can be broadly categorised into the following:

LEVELS OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOALS	
<b>Inform</b>	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.
<b>Consult</b>	To obtain public feedback for decision-makers on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.
<b>Involve</b>	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered in decision making processes.
<b>Collaborate</b>	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.
<b>Empower</b>	To place final decision-making in the hands of the public.

A full stakeholder engagement process as presented by this toolkit, would at a minimum, seek "involvement" from the public/stakeholder groups in which it operates, and depending on the agreed purpose of the project, may seek to transfer full 'empowerment' to the public in terms of final decision-making responsibilities.

## Securing Institutional and Developer Buy-in

In most cases there is a need to secure both **institutional and developer buy-in to the process** – i.e. the need to demonstrate the positive spin-offs of a carefully managed engagement process, to encourage institutional and developer support/endorsement from the outset.

### Why?

In the realm of brownfield and other development projects, obtaining developer buy-in to the stakeholder engagement process, is equally as important as obtaining institutional backing. There are many compelling arguments for why institutional and developer support for the engagement process should be sought as early as possible. These include:

- “added value” and greater sustainability for related projects and agendas
- better co-ordinated consultations
- establishing a clear audit trail of engagement to support the project
- there is a higher risk of project failure if engagement is not done

In addition to the main grounds for undertaking stakeholder engagement (such as getting community buy-in for a project and more sustainable decision-making), other potential spin-offs for developers include an improved corporate image, marketing leverage from hosting or sponsoring community events, becoming a case-study of good business practice, and helping to raise the corporate social profile of the company.

### How to obtain Institutional Support

Obtaining institutional buy-in can be sought through a number of avenues. These include:

- getting stakeholders to raise the issue through institutional channels and/or lobby the need for it
- relationship building with key sympathetic individuals in the organisational structure
- obtaining *top* level support for it - i.e. becomes a mandate from the local leader or chief executive
- piggy-backing it to existing community outreach programmes or providing the mandate for it based on existing corporate or public social responsibility (CSR/PSR), sustainability, or public participation policies
- employing specialist “champions” with “teeth”
- getting relevant members enthusiastic and supportive of the process by getting them involved
- “*Seeing is believing*”....just doing stakeholder engagement and demonstrating the actual cost savings and positive spin-offs from it
- Getting cabinet or political processes to adopt it as POLICY
- Working to ensure that it becomes an integral part of institutional planning systems i.e. engrained in the ethos of the organisation “stakeholder engagement just the way we do business”



## How to obtain Developer Support

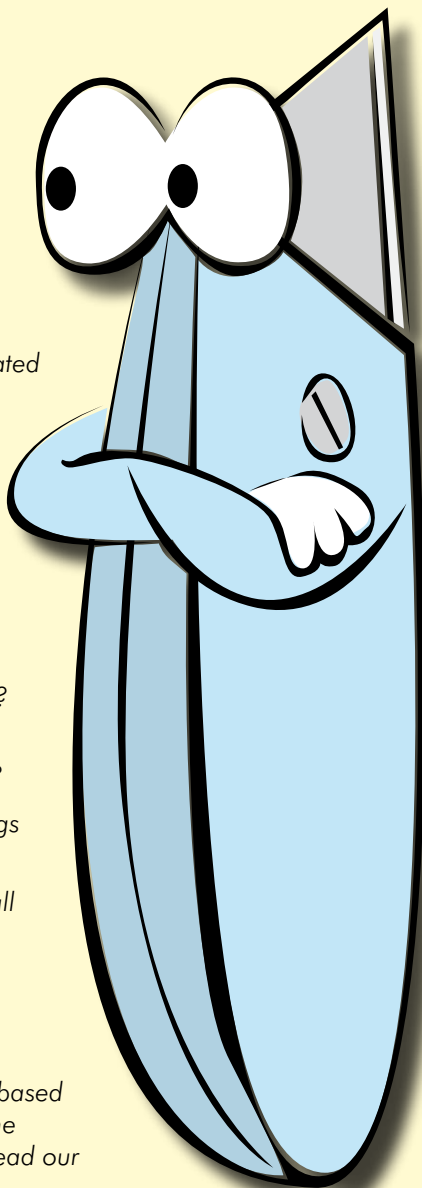
Developers can be encouraged to support (and often finance) the process through many of the same channels used to secure institutional buy-in. In addition, the following incentives can be offered:

- Selling the merits of stakeholder engagement such as the long-term cost-savings, reduced conflict and sustainability benefits
- Offering institutional support and match funding for the process
- Taking a more hard-line approach, by making it a **requirement** of the tender process – i.e. the developer would not be considered *unless* they agreed to carry out (or commission) a full stakeholder engagement process.

## Freedom of Information Act - Notes

In controversial cases, journalists, campaigning stakeholders and enthusiastic members of the public will soon start using the Freedom of Information Act to request information about the way consultations have been undertaken. They are likely to ask questions such as:-

- Q** *Who was involved in your pre-consultation discussions? Who formulated the questions?*
- Q** *Why did you survey the residents of XX but not YY?*
- Q** *How did you select people to take part in your Focus Groups? How representative were they?*
- Q** *Where exactly did you advertise the public meetings? How was it that our members did not hear about it in time?*
- Q** *Can we see the raw data from the Residents Panel survey on this subject?*
- Q** *Can we see the minutes of the meetings you held with the property developer?*
- Q** *How did you summarise the views of all those who responded to you? What happened to our submission?*
- Q** *Did the decision-makers see our submission?*
- Q** *What recommendation did you make based upon the consultation process? Had the person making the recommendation read our submission?*



# AIM OF THE TOOLKIT

Whilst this toolkit is intended to provide a valuable planning tool for brownfield projects, it is not brownfield-specific and can be used for a wide range of projects involving stakeholder engagement.

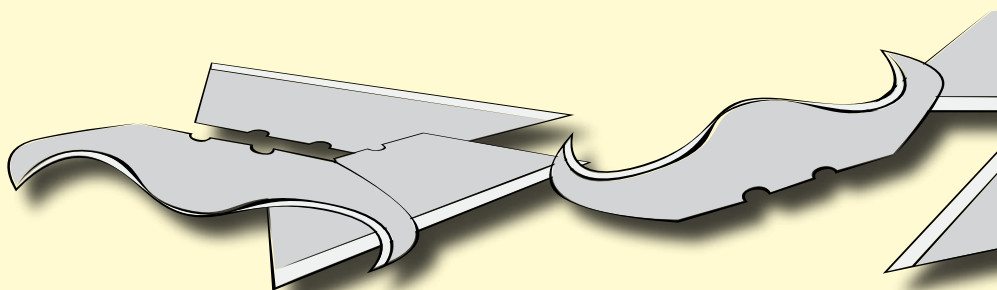
The overall aim of the toolkit is:

**To provide a framework for organisations to consider the key components necessary to engage with stakeholders**

As no two development projects are ever identical – varying in site, constraints, funding partners and timescales – one cannot expect to replicate the participation process of one project (no matter how successful) to produce the same results in another. Rather, it is necessary to treat each process separately, learning from the lessons of similar projects but recognising where there is room for improvement. This toolkit is intended to provide a generic guideline for how to plan and manage an effective engagement process.

## **What is not included in the Toolkit**

This toolkit does not set out to provide a detailed “how to” guide; nor does it cover all the elements of stakeholder engagement at the level of detail which may be required. For example, it does not even attempt to address the wide range of methodologies/techniques that could be employed in the actual engagement phase. However, it does provide a broad framework (and strategic guidelines) for the planning, management and implementation of the **participatory process**. From providing guidance on how to identify and define the purpose, scope and context of the process – to planning the final review and evaluation, we hope that this toolkit will provide a straight-forward and practical management tool that will remain within arms reach, as opposed to yet another “how-to-do” manual gathering dust on your bookshelf.



# HOW THE TOOLKIT WORKS

## **Stakeholder Engagement Planning - Flowchart Diagram**

(essentially a hyperlinked “contents” page for the toolkit) provides a diagrammatic overview of the stakeholder engagement process, which is hyperlinked to respective **Guidelines of Best Practice** within the body of the toolkit.

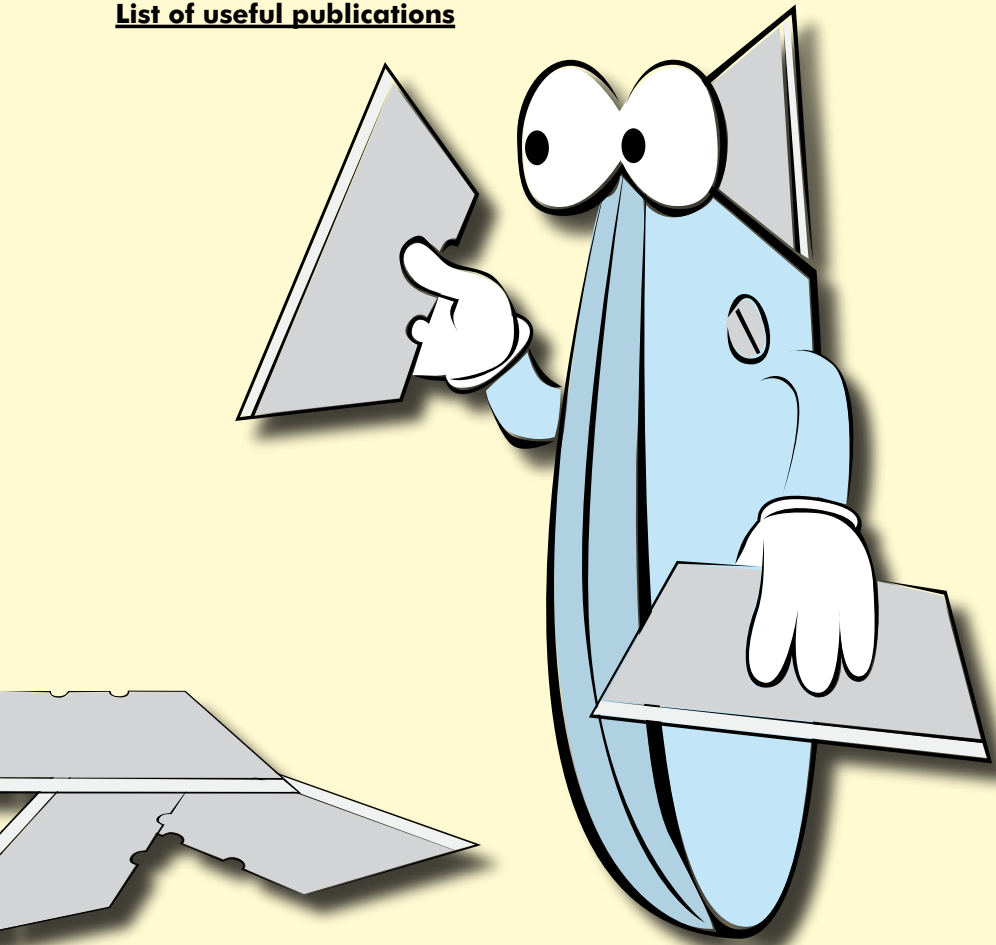
**Stakeholder Engagement Plan Framework** - comprises the main element of the toolkit and is a proforma that outlines the main elements that should be worked through in planning a stakeholder engagement. Each element is hyperlinked to respective **Guidelines of Best Practice** within the body of the toolkit.

**Guidelines of Best Practice** are included in the body of the toolkit to provide definitions, rationale, key themes or questions, and background or additional information for each element of the process. These are hyperlinked to the relevant parts of both the **Stakeholder Engagement Planning Flowchart Diagram** and the **Stakeholder Engagement Plan Framework**.

**Evaluation Matrix** – a tool to assist in the review process, both before, during and after a stakeholder engagement activity.

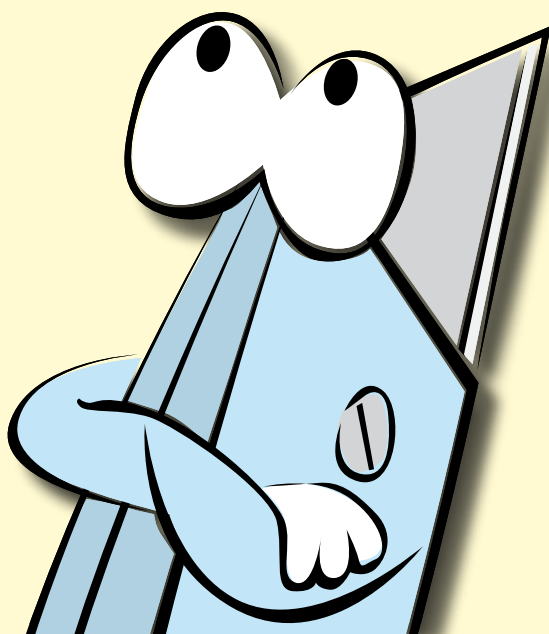
**Lessons Learned Log** - a proforma to assist in logging lessons learned through the review and final evaluation processes.

## **List of useful publications**





# STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PLANNING FLOWCHART DIAGRAM



## A: DESIRED OUTCOMES

### Definition:

Desired outcomes are the overall aims of an engagement process.

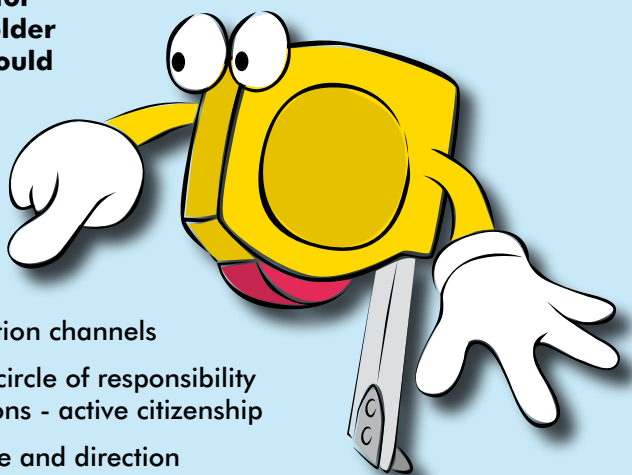
Actual outcomes are the fundamental difference that a process makes: **its overall results and impacts**.

Outcomes are more specific than “purpose”, and are the clear statement of exactly what is sought from the process.

The desired outcomes of a stakeholder engagement exercise should always be at the forefront of planning an engagement process. They should be clearly stated, detailing exactly what is sought from the process and should transcend all other considerations, always remaining the focus of the engagement, rather than the outputs of the process itself.

**The desired outcomes for undertaking a stakeholder engagement process could include:**

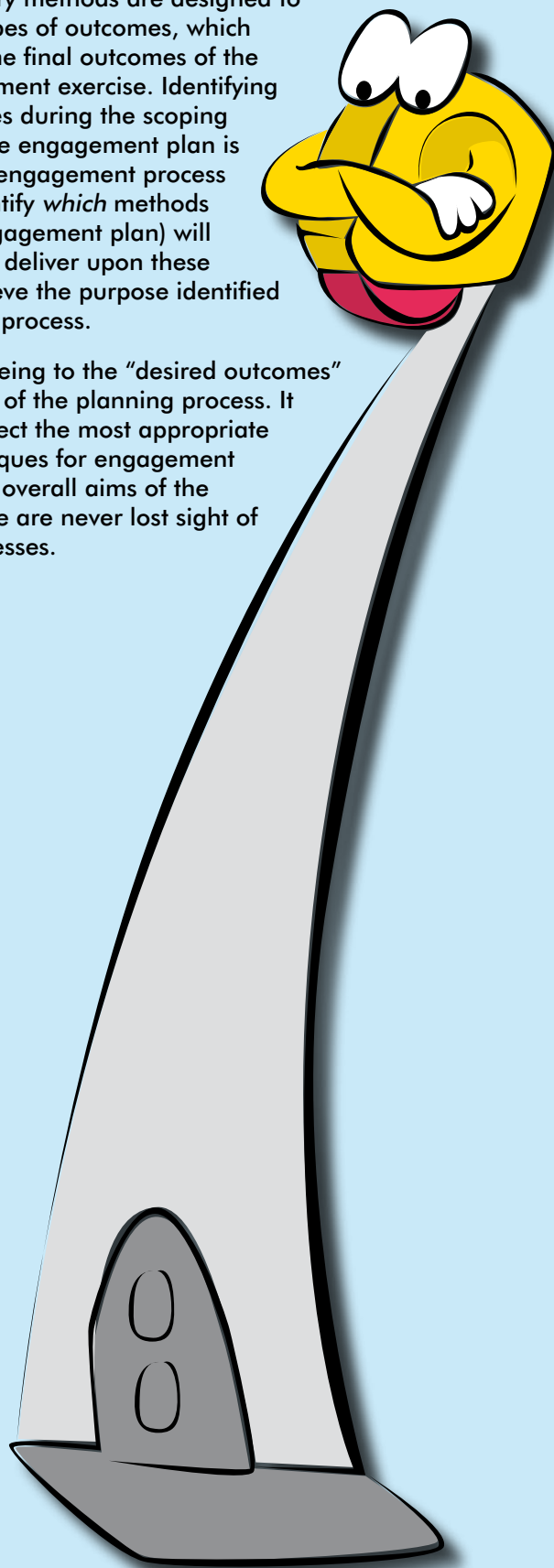
- Improved personal and/or working relationships
- Changed perceptions (for the better)
- Improved communication channels
- Promotion of a wider circle of responsibility for decisions and actions - active citizenship
- Agreement on purpose and direction (i.e. buy-in) of a project or programme
- Early identification of potential issues, conflicts and benefits
- Generation of new ideas
- Formation of new formal partnerships
- Defusion of conflict situations before these impede progress
- Enhancement of social capital and/or improved services for people
- Policy change
- Cost savings in the medium to long-term
- Promotion of local capacity building and learning (individual and organisational)
- Local support and goodwill fostered for a new idea or initiative
- Increased community cohesion and strengthened shared identity.



## How do our desired outcomes influence the methodology we adopt?

Different participatory methods are designed to produce different types of outcomes, which in turn, determine the final outcomes of the stakeholder engagement exercise. Identifying our desired outcomes during the scoping phase (i.e. before the engagement plan is formulated and the engagement process begun) helps to identify *which* methods (identified in the engagement plan) will be the most likely to deliver upon these outcomes, and achieve the purpose identified for the engagement process.

Identifying and agreeing to the “desired outcomes” is thus a crucial part of the planning process. It not only helps to select the most appropriate methodology/techniques for engagement but ensures that the overall aims of the engagement exercise are never lost sight of as the project progresses.



## B: SCOPING PROCESS

The “Stakeholder Engagement Process Flowchart” illustrates that the **Purpose, Scope** and **Context** of any stakeholder engagement are closely interrelated factors. This is because they are defined to varying degrees by each other. In combination with **Stakeholder Identification** they constitute the “**Scoping Process**” from which, contingent upon institutional support, an “**Engagement Plan**” might be formulated, and stakeholder engagement process begun.

### BI: PURPOSE

#### Rationale:

Defining the purpose or reason for **why** a stakeholder engagement process should take place, is perhaps the single most important stage of any stakeholder engagement process.

A good purpose will be highly focused with clear aims, (originating from the Desired Outcomes) and objectives. A poorly defined purpose will be vague regarding the potential outcomes of a project and open to different interpretations.

It is critical, that the persons or organisation(s) responsible for commissioning the stakeholder engagement process share a **common** purpose. Too often, different purposes exist within the same organisation, sometimes unspoken or assumed, and only coming to light when the process is underway. This can be both damaging and embarrassing.

#### Purpose as a reference point

Once established, the agreed purpose can provide a reference point throughout the stakeholder engagement process, for the project manager, the commissioning body and the participants themselves. This might be especially so if participants try to introduce new subjects or issues. Their relevance to the purpose can be used to determine whether or not they should be included.

A clear purpose enables the commissioning body to ensure that the right mechanisms are in place to transform the process outputs into outcomes. Many processes fail because commissioning institutions do not live up to the expectations placed on them. Clarifying the purpose ensures that any commissioning body knows what it is getting into and can then check whether “participation” is appropriate.

Finally, a clear purpose gives participants an understanding of what they are part of and the opportunity to make an informed choice about getting involved in the first place. Too often we hear complaints of people feeling misled or manipulated. This is often because of miscommunication between the commissioning body and participants as to what the process can change.



## Defining the purpose

Defining a clear purpose is not as easy as it sounds. For an organisation to reach a shared understanding requires time, which is almost always in short supply, especially at the start of a process. External circumstances can also affect the purpose and this possibility should be anticipated. For example, the results of forthcoming research or a decision taken by others can influence both the context and the purpose of a participation process. This is a particular risk if the process is not recognised or valued by people more senior than those involved in the detailed design and delivery.

**Identifying** the purpose will involve liaising:

- **Internally** to clarify what can be changed as a result of the process and what outcomes and outputs are sought
- **Externally** with those affected by the project and to identify people's interests and concerns.

It is important in defining the purpose, as opposed to the desired outcomes, that there is clarity in understanding the difference between **aims** and **objectives**. These in turn are respectively linked to outcomes and outputs.

- **Aims** describe the *desired outcomes* you ultimately want to achieve overall, for example, to decide, though reaching a consensus, whether or not to build incinerators in a given area; (see Section A above).
- **Objectives** describe how you will achieve the *outputs*, i.e. the products that will ultimately lead to achieving the overall outcomes (*Objectives must be SMART: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and to a Timescale*) for example, by holding a focus group workshop at a suitable venue and time with all stakeholders, including technical experts, to discuss the issues, provide information and try to reach a consensus before the end of June.

Making a clear distinction between aims and objectives will contribute to defining a robust and useful purpose.

**To help define an accurate purpose**, the following questions should be asked:

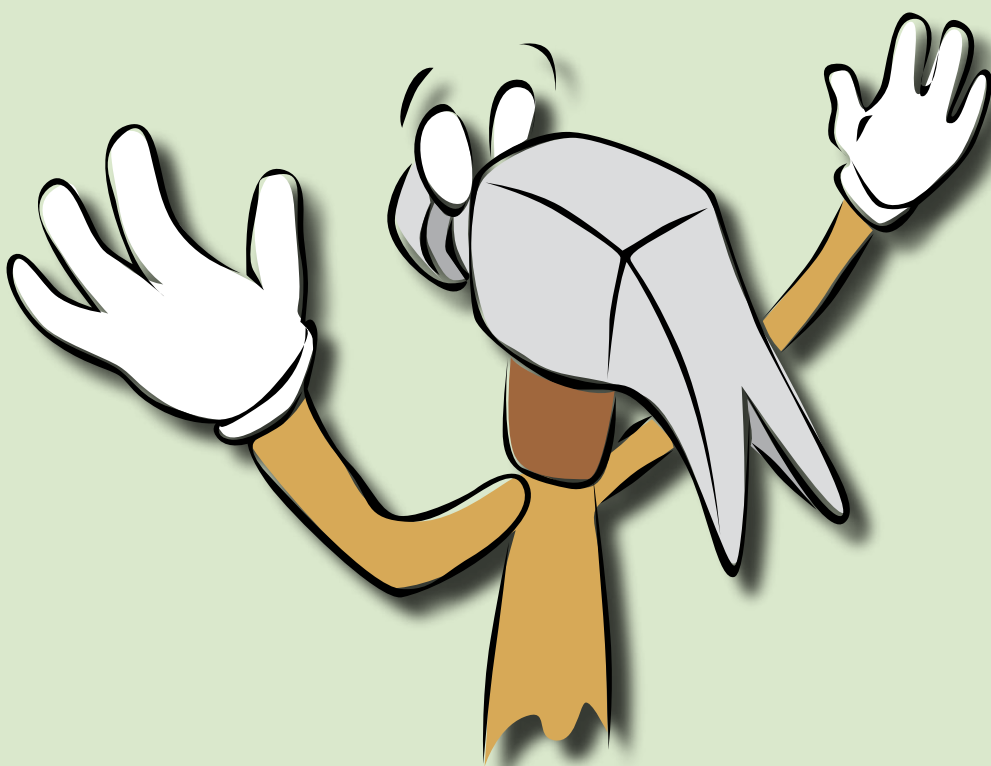
- What do you want to have achieved overall at the end of this process (i.e. anticipated **outcomes**)?
- What tangible products do you want to have produced from this stakeholder engagement process (i.e. your key **outputs**)?

**To cross-reference the validity of your purpose** - and indeed the potential success of the stakeholder engagement commission - one should ask the following question:

- What needs to be done with these **outputs**, in order to ensure the desired **outcomes** are achieved?

Possible **purposes** (or reasons) for undertaking stakeholder engagement, include:

- to harness other people's energies and resources
- to explore issues and come up with fresh ideas
- to network, share ideas and best practice
- to assist decision-making
- to inform
- to understand local needs and wants
- to encourage local buy-in and ownership in projects
- to achieve more sustainable results
- to better understand and monitor community perceptions
- to establish more open communication channels, gain trust or work on breaking down historic barriers.





## B2 : SCOPE

**Rationale:**

The reason for defining the scope of a participatory exercise is to clarify exactly what the **boundaries to the exercise** are – i.e. what can really be achieved in practice.

Identifying the scope of a project helps to define an appropriate and achievable purpose.

**Defining the scope**

In defining the scope of the engagement exercise, the following questions should be asked:

- **How much can really change?** Establishing what can actually change as a result of participation is critical. Defining this will require liaison with the decision maker(s), and should result in a clear statement from them as to what the engagement exercise *can* change. The International Association of Public Participation calls this the “Promise to the Public”.
- **Is participation appropriate at all?** There is no point in going any further with participation if for example:
  - Nothing can change, no matter what the results of the participation
  - There is no demand or interest from potential participants in getting involved
  - There are insufficient resources to make the process work properly
- **What level is being sought?** It is important to be clear as to the level of participation that is sought through stakeholder engagement (see “Levels of Public Participation Goals” in “Background”). This being identified will assist in selecting appropriate methods of engagement.
- **What are the risks?** Every activity carries risks and working with the public is by its very nature unpredictable. This is partly why participation is being done - to reach something new, something not already known. Good risk management requires that the potential risks are considered from the start.

The main risks in participation are to:

- **Reputations.** Everyone involved in participation is risking their reputation, whether in the design and delivery of the participatory exercise, the willingness to participate at all, and the willingness to abide by the results (if that is appropriate to the technique used)
- **Resources.** Participation costs money and takes time, including from skilled personnel
- **Failure to deliver on promised outcomes.** Even where the desired outcomes seem clearly defined from the start, decision-makers may refuse to accept the outcomes in the event, or unrealistic expectations may be raised and trust lost
- **Political hijacking.** Is the stakeholder engagement process being used to front personal or political agendas?
- **Relationships.** A poorly run process can damage relationships between all those involved. Although participation can increase social capital and build capacity if designed to do so, bad participation can damage relationships and undermine confidence.

Undertaking stakeholder engagement as “something which needs to be done” - and treated as such – is reason enough NOT to embark upon the process.



Return to  
flowchart



Go to  
framework



## B3: CONTEXT

**Rationale:**

*A good participatory process must be well embedded within its context. By 'context' we are referring to the **background** to the issue being addressed by the engagement process. Relevant issues pertaining to context could include discussions or outcomes from previous engagement on the issue, as well as the historical, political, physical and cultural context of the issue.*

Understanding the wider context in which the stakeholder engagement process will take place is critical to ensuring:

- Links with other relevant organisations and related activities are recognised
- That the engagement process is responsive to participant needs and/or sensitivities by appreciating their wider role
- The engagement process is built upon previous experience and lessons learnt rather than duplicating previous efforts
- That the process will contribute to relevant and measurable progress.

**Determining the context**

The context of any stakeholder engagement is determined by a broad spectrum of factors. Some of the most likely to affect the success of a participatory process, and/or the choice of methods adopted, include:

- **Decision-making environment.**

Before embarking upon any stakeholder engagement process you will want to know about:

- The interest, commitment and/or involvement of key decision-makers in the process
- Legal and policy parameters
- How this current participatory process fits into the relevant decision-making systems (e.g. timing, required documents, etc.)

- **History**

You will need to find out about:

- Past participatory exercises on the same project/programme, including how they went (e.g. conflict, agreement), and what were the final outcomes
- Other relevant past activities which may affect planned discussions.

- **Other relevant activities.**

You will want to know which other activities - past or planned - are going on, so that information can be shared, duplication or oversight reduced, and potential outputs dovetailed (if that is appropriate). This could include other activities that are:

- Covering the same subject area (e.g. the same programme, or issue)
- Covering the same geographical area
- Involving the same participants.

## • Characteristics and capabilities of participants

As a process's purpose is defined by its scope and context (and vice-versa), so the identification of stakeholders is determined by the *background* (i.e. context) of the communities/stakeholder groups at which the engagement process is targeted. Before any engagement process is begun, it is wise to do background research on the following

- Identify **which sectors of society are unlikely to participate** (for e.g. from disadvantaged neighbourhoods) but whom would add value to the process if they did participate, and how best to reach and support their involvement
- Assess existing **relationships between key participants** (e.g. antagonism or political alliances), including these groups relationship with the consulting authority and/or relevant decision-makers
- Consider the **diversity of participation experience amongst the identified stakeholder groups**. Those with more experience may have skills and confidence to dominate proceedings. The process may need to be designed to deal with these differences if they are significant (e.g. different sessions for different interests, with all brought together at the end). Alternatively, the process could be designed to suit the most - or least - experienced
- Consider the **cultural diversity of participants** which may affect, for example, people's willingness to meet all together (e.g. men and women together), and/or affect the way different participants are used to debating in public with others (e.g. those with formal committee experience may expect a chair and formal debating procedures)
- **Language** – do you need to provide interpreters to ensure you get the people you need there, and whether it needs to be made clear on any promotional literature that a translator will be used
- Any **barriers to people working together** e.g. gender barriers and whether men will be able to work with all women groups.

### Communicate your understanding of “the context” early on

Although you (the commissioning agent) may think you have a good understanding of the “context” in which the stakeholder engagement process is operating, **it is important to recognise that most participants will have their own interpretation of the context in which they see the stakeholder engagement process operating, as well as their respective roles in it.**

It is important to communicate your understanding of “the context” in the early phases of the engagement, to provide the identified stakeholder groups with a platform to provide comment and input, that would help to develop a **shared understanding** of the context for this specific participatory process. Sufficient time should be set aside to do this, and as early as possible in the engagement process.



## B4: STAKEHOLDER IDENTIFICATION

**Rationale:**

Identifying **who should be involved/consulted in the engagement process** is perhaps one of the most difficult parts to doing stakeholder engagement.

Finding the right mix of participants, and ensuring that no group is inadvertently (or perhaps, intentionally) excluded, is essential to providing legitimacy and credibility to the engagement process.

**Identifying who should be Involved:**

Whilst no engagement process is the same (being determined by the individual context and scope of the project or issue), there are some general principles for identifying appropriate participants. Below are some specific questions which can help to ensure that no important sectors are forgotten:

- Who is directly responsible for the decisions on the issues?
- Who is influential in the area, community and/or organisation?
- Who will be affected by any decisions on the issue (individuals and organisations)?
- Who runs organisations with relevant interests?
- Who is influential on this issue?
- Who can obstruct a decision if not involved?
- Who has been involved in this issue in the past?
- Who has not been involved, but should have been?

It is also useful to consider categories of participants, which would include:

- A sample representative from the wider public (whether or not they directly affected by the issue)
- Those particular sections of the public directly affected by the issue
- Statutory Consultees
- Relevant government organisations
- Special interest groups, local or national NGOs, trade associations, & unions representatives
- Individuals with particular expertise (technical or personal)

**helpful  
hint**

If the aim is to be inclusive and open to whoever wants to be involved, the best approach is often to identify an initial list of people and then ask them who else **they** think should be involved.

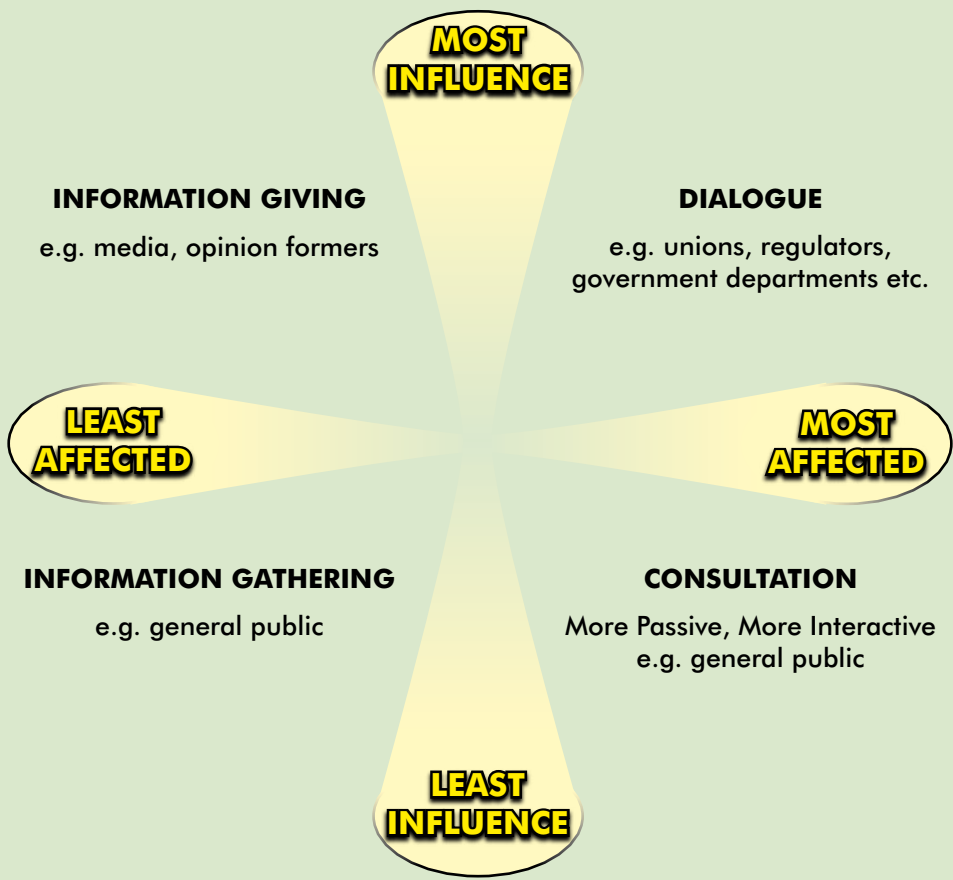


## Other Key Issues to consider when identifying potential Stakeholder Groups

- **Who decides who is involved.** As the selection of participants can be such a politically charged responsibility, it is useful to make the selection process as transparent as possible. Ideally, the planning/design group for the whole process will make these decisions. It is wise to ensure that the reasons for selection are noted so that any questions about selection can be answered.
- **Resisting pressure on numbers.** There is often internal and external pressure to expand or reduce the list of those involved. The number of people involved should not be arbitrary but based on a coherent understanding of the purpose and the context of the process.
- **Marginalising “Usual suspects”.** Organisations sometimes try to avoid involving the “usual suspects”, which has become a term of denigration for people who habitually give time and effort to what they see as their civic responsibilities. Describing someone as a ‘usual suspect’ should never be grounds to exclude them from a process any more than it is grounds for including them: people should be involved because they are the *right* people.
- **Opponents.** It is equally wrong to exclude an individual or an organisation for being a known opponent of a given purpose or process. Indeed, there are often good reasons for keeping opponents “inside the tent”: these can be the people who most need to be involved so that they gain some ownership of the process and perhaps become more likely to support the final outcome (or at least, less inclined to undermine it as they might have, had they been excluded).
- **Hard to Reach Groups.** It is important to try to include **all** relevant stakeholders, and those who often get omitted are the hard to reach groups. Extra effort and innovation will be needed to contact and engage with these groups or individuals, who do not generally come forward by their own volition. Including these minority or “hard to reach” groups is important to obtaining a more balanced picture from the engagement process.
- **Everyone does not have to be involved in everything.** With good planning, and the agreement of participants, different people can be involved only in those parts of the process which are most relevant to them.
- **Campaigning organisations.** Many campaigning bodies, especially national NGOs, are constantly asked to be involved in participatory exercises, and do not always see these as the most effective use of their limited resources. In addition, some see the compromise that can be inherent in some participatory processes as conflicting with their primary purposes. It can be useful to consider (and discuss with them) at which stage of the policy process NGOs are best suited to participate: agenda setting, policy development, policy implementation or policy review.
- **What’s In It for Them (WIIFT)?** It is important to consider and discuss with participants what they want to get out of the process and what could prevent them from participating. If everyone’s motivations can be clarified at the start, there will be less confusion and everyone is more likely to be satisfied with the outcomes. This is especially important in an area that is suffering from consultation fatigue.



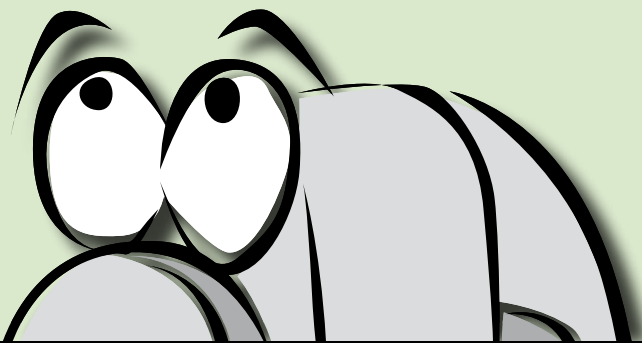
TOOLS THAT CAN BE USED IN IDENTIFYING STAKEHOLDERS  
&  
THE ROLE EACH MAY PLAY IN AN ENGAGEMENT PROCESS\*



Other axes that can be used in identifying stakeholders are as follows:

Degree of interest in the issue	Ease of engagement
Representativeness	Positive "pioneers"/ Negative "well-poisoners"
Resource capacity	High airtime/low airtime

\* The above tool was provided courtesy of "Involve" ([www.involve.org.uk](http://www.involve.org.uk)) from their publication "People and Participation"



TOOL TO ASSIST IN THE EVALUATION OF STAKEHOLDERS' NEEDS				
Stakeholder				
Skill Level				
Confidence Level				
Cultural diversity	Language need			
	Other need			
Likely participant				
Hard to Reach				
Importance				
Key: 1 = High 2 = Medium 3 = Low				





## INSTITUTIONAL BUY-IN/RESPONSE

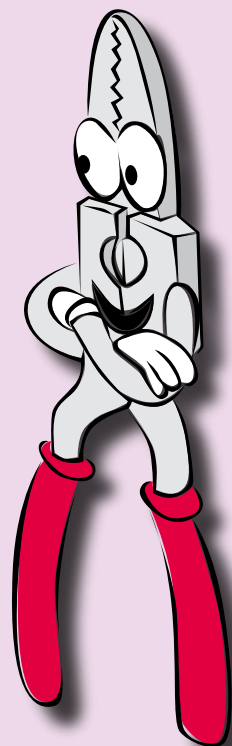
One of the core issues affecting the success of any Stakeholder Engagement process is the need to understand the wider system into which the participatory process fits. Whether it is a local council, private sector corporation or development agency, it is essential that the link is made **explicit** between the participatory process and the *location* of the decision that will affect future action (especially if the final decision is taken outside the participatory process). This entails planning for how the institutional response to the outputs and outcomes of the participatory process will be managed.

Gaining institutional support for the process (be it corporate, developer or public sector buy-in) is often the single most important ingredient to ensuring that the outcomes of the engagement process are realised.

The nature of the system and processes in which decisions are made, are an important consideration in determining which outputs and outcomes should be sought (for the engagement process) and will also affect the choice of participatory methods used.

Clarifying the process in order to gain institutional support (and response) is vitally important because:

- It establishes a commitment to change from the outset by recognising that some response will need to be made
- It ensures that mechanisms are in place to deal with the outputs that come from the participatory process, and ensures that these outputs can be dealt with effectively and within a given timescale
- It allows those running the process to explain to participants exactly what will be done with their effort, how the process will be managed and how its outcomes will affect/change things
- It helps clarify what is and is not discussed (no point discussing things that really cannot be changed)
- It helps clarify the roles of the different participants, as it clarifies what is expected of them all at different stages of the process.



Institutional support for the engagement process should be sought as early as possible.


However, decision-makers will usually require background information upon which to base their decision to support the process or not. The “scoping process” in which the purpose, scope, context, desired outcomes and stakeholder identification of the engagement process are defined, would meet this requirement.

*(This is why, “obtaining institutional support” is placed after the Scoping Process but as an ongoing process in the Engagement Plan on the engagement process flow chart, although the process needs to be continually adaptive).*

Obtaining institutional support for the process might happen before the scoping phase has even begun (helping to shape the desired outcomes from the outset), mid-way through the process (with desired outputs needing to be realigned accordingly), or perhaps even not at all (at the risk of not having decisions made or taken forward). The engagement process (and the planning thereof) needs to be sufficiently adaptive to these possibilities.


An institutional response can be the most **significant** change that occurs following a participation process, be it a resultant policy change (such as we *will* change the routing of a road) or a reaction (i.e. we will not change the route of the road because...). Any such change requires agreement to change from the institution itself, and preparation within the institution.

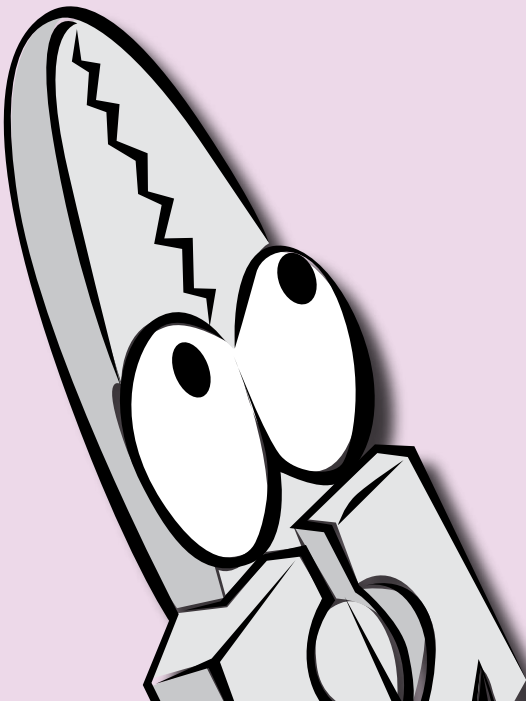
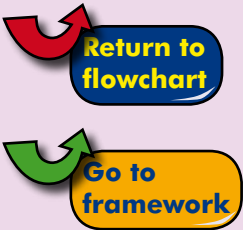
If for whatever reasons, it is likely that it will prove impossible for an institution to respond in the way participants of the engagement process anticipate or desire, this needs to be made clear as soon as possible. It is the job of those steering the engagement process to recognise this and decide how to deal with it. In fact, the process should never get underway in the first place, if its desired outcomes are completely unrealistic.



**warning!**

Raising expectations, requesting the investment of time and energy, and then ignoring the outcomes is a recipe for cynicism at best and civil disobedience at worst.





## C: ENGAGEMENT PLAN

### Rationale:

*After the scoping phase has been undertaken and there is institutional support/or buy-in to the Stakeholder Engagement Process, a detailed engagement plan needs to be written to provide the planning framework for the participatory process. It is at this stage that the decisions about timing, numbers, costs, techniques, use of results etc. will be made.*

### C1. Commissioning an Engagement Plan

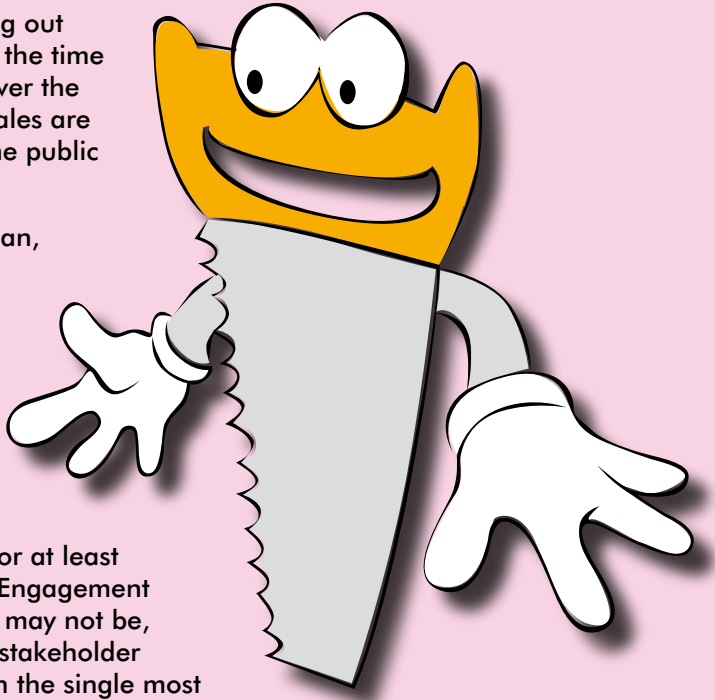
Perhaps the biggest barrier to carrying out effective stakeholder engagement, is the time needed to effectively design and deliver the process. Too often, unrealistic timescales are set by commissioners, especially in the public sector.

In commissioning the engagement plan, here are some key steps to consider:

- The Engagement Plan (EP) should only take place after the Scoping Process is complete as the results of this first phase should feed directly into/serve to inform the Engagement Plan
- Institutional support (or buy-in) should have been sought before (or at least during) the commissioning of the Engagement Plan. Institutional support may, or may not be, a prerequisite to proceeding with stakeholder engagement. Either way, it is often the single most important determinant to the potential success of any project.
- Appoint dedicated staff to writing the Engagement Plan
- The following are critical elements of any engagement plan:
  - time schedule,
  - resource allocation,
  - desired outcomes,
  - communication strategy (including follow-up),
  - delivery logistics
  - selection of methods/techniques to be used in the engagement.

Whilst there are many interrelated issues, not included in this list, no effective Engagement Plan (EP) would overlook any of the above components.

- Finally, scheduling intermittent review periods, both during and after the engagement process is complete, is a key criterion of the Engagement Plan.
- The review process should also be used towards the end of the planning phase, to evaluate the quality of the engagement plan, prior to any engagement taking place.





## Commissioning an Engagement Team

Even the simplest engagement process will benefit from a **formal** engagement team to ensure that the process planning is taken seriously and programmed into people's work schedules. The team can also be used to get early buy-in from those who need to take account of the results of the process (sometimes a separate 'executive group' may be needed for major processes to ensure senior management involvement).

The engagement planning team can be the same people as those responsible for delivering the process, or a separate delivery team may be established, in which case very close working relationships need to be established. Both planning and delivery teams may involve external contractors as well as internal colleagues. If the skills do not exist within your organisation to plan for or deliver the engagement process, then professionals such as facilitators can provide valuable contribution, especially if the issue is likely to be controversial or when the independence of the facilitation could be an issue.

Whoever is selected to deliver the process should be involved as early as possible. Finding the *right* facilitator however, can be the most difficult part. Consider using a recognised facilitation network such as InterACT to identify accredited facilitators in your area or use references, recommendations and/or personal experience to buy-in external expertise. But take heed.....

### word of advice

***"The only thing worse than no facilitator, is a bad facilitator"***

Peter Woodward (Quest Facilitation – Stakeholder Engagement Workshop, 21-23 March 2006)



There is also a common misconception that facilitators are "just the people hired to run meetings" Involving facilitators in the planning process (i.e. the engagement plan) can help to better plan processes, and provide realistic guidance about what can be achieved and how to do it. In fact, many professional facilitators will not "run meetings" unless they have been involved in the planning process.

### ***Some factors to consider in choosing a facilitator are:***

- **Subject knowledge** – while facilitators do not need to be experts in the subject area they need to know enough to facilitate the debate and take the process forward.
- **Reputation and experience** especially in similar circumstances
- **Training and methods used**
- **Appropriate style** – While many facilitators may have to deal with a wide range of contexts, some facilitators may be more experienced and comfortable, for example, dealing with a professional high status forum rather than a small local community meeting (and vice versa).

In some engagement processes, it may also be beneficial to have support from external professionals such as lawyers or planners, who understand the system being worked within.

### tip

Consider local organisations who may be able to provide these specialist services such as local facilitators' networks, law centres or planning aid networks.



## C2. Content of an Engagement Plan

**A good engagement plan should include or consider the following issues:**

- **Budget.** An adequate budget is essential, including setting aside time for staff who need to be involved
- **Timeline.** Be realistic about how long things take and always allow more rather than less time for planning and for people to get involved. Remember that time is needed between events for work to be completed and to be taken to the next stage.
- **Key dates and actions** including when final decisions need to be taken, and by whom, are all part of the planning process and should be part of the engagement plan.
- **Methods.** There are many different participatory/engagement techniques which can be adopted, and indeed a range of methods are useful at different stages of the consultation process. For further information on the different methodologies and techniques available a useful publication to refer to would be "The Community Planning Handbook" by Nick Wates, published by Earthscan Publications Ltd (2000). Careful planning is required to ensure that the various methodologies adopted are complementary and work together to make the overall process successful.
- **Organisational Logistics.** Participatory processes require a lot of practical arrangements, especially in terms of user-friendly briefing materials and suitable venues. In addition to logistical practicalities, consideration should be given to the choice of venue with respect to the positive and negative potential effects that this may have on the process and its consequent outcomes.
- **Communication Strategy.** Communication is important throughout the engagement process. It is needed at the outset to get people interested, during the process so they are kept abreast of what is happening, at the end and by way of follow-up, to ensure that people are aware of what difference the process has made.
- **Follow up.** Initial planning needs to consider right from the start:
  - How the results will be used, how it will feed into decision-making systems, and how the final outcomes will be reported back to the participants and others
  - How you will know whether the process has been a success – success criteria can be reformulated from the original objectives of the process

Appropriate follow up should be carried out as soon as reasonably possible after the engagement event takes place.

- **Defining Outputs.** Outputs are the *tangible* products of any process. Outputs include such things as reports, meetings or workshops, exhibitions and leaflets: useful in themselves, but alone will not meet the purpose of the engagement process.

Defining the desired outputs of the engagement process is a crucial part of the engagement plan as it helps the process designer to select the most appropriate methodology (different participatory techniques are designed to produce different types of outputs); forces people to think through how the outputs will achieve the desired outcomes ("how will this meeting help achieve our overall outcomes?") and ensures that the right outputs are produced at the right time.

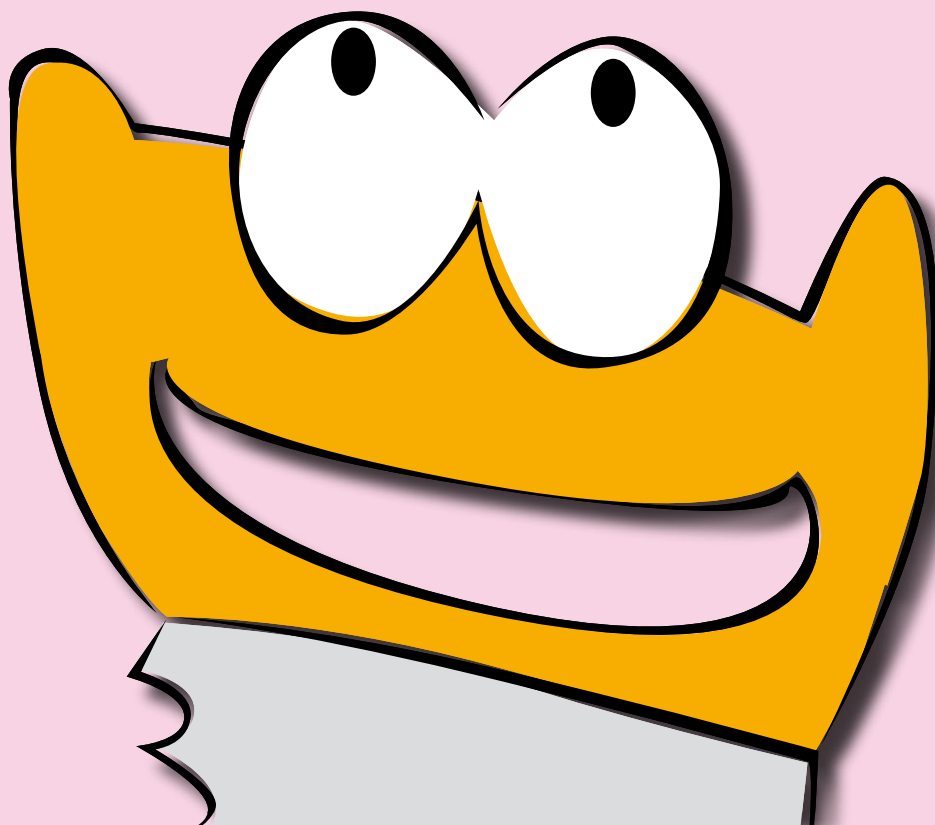
### note

*Outputs can be seen as the building blocks that help create the desired outcomes. The success of an exercise should therefore never be judged only on the outputs: the holding of a meeting does not necessarily mean full achievement of the objectives of the overall process.*



- **Additional considerations.** Every participatory process has to operate within practical and political constraints including money, time, skills shortages, accessibility and characteristics of participants. It will help to identify which constraints are genuinely fixed, and those that could be potentially overcome. “Ground rules” should also be set to establish a clear ethical framework in which the engagement process will take place (e.g. non-attribution or confidentiality; being aware of child protection, minority and disability issues).

**The hyperlinked Stakeholder Engagement Plan Framework in this documents is intended to be used as a template for documenting your Engagement Plan.**



## D: ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

It can be some time before one actually starts the engagement process - i.e. where the actions outlined by the engagement plan are actually put into practice.

The outputs produced during this time, are the most obvious “measurables” for how the process is proceeding. However, some “outputs” have an intrinsic value regardless of whether they contribute to the overall outcomes. Exchanging information, for example, can help to build trust among participants even if the information itself is of no particular value. Similarly, simply having a meeting can sometimes be more important than what the meeting achieves because of the opportunity it provided to build or strengthen relationships. Good process design (specifically applied to the engagement plan) would include planning for intangible as well as tangible gains.

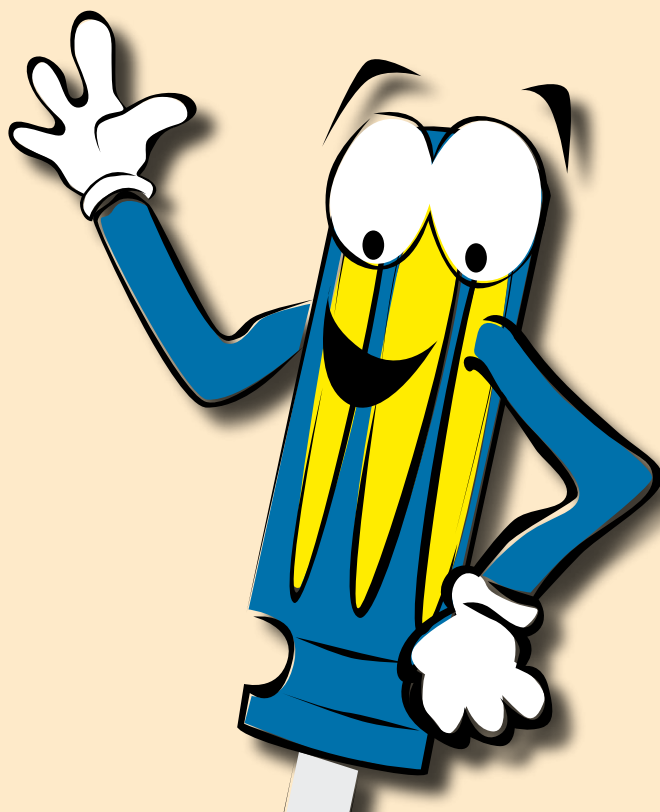
Establishing if the desired outcomes (i.e. the reasons for doing stakeholder engagement in the first place) are being achieved - either in part or in full – can only be known through a process of ongoing review. These reviews need to include the perspective of all those involved in the process - including whoever is leading the process, decision-makers and participants.



**consider**

An iterative approach enables a process to adapt to new and unforeseen circumstances. No matter how much planning is put in, when working with participatory processes the unpredictable is inevitable (be it new political agendas or participant responses).

The trick is to have an **iterative** and **flexible** approach to managing the process that would help you respond to the unpredictable.





## REVIEW PROCESS

### Rationale:

The main purpose of a review is to provide those involved in the engagement process (and others) with the information to judge whether or not the process is likely to be, or has been, a success.

A review is usually understood to be an evaluation (in varying detail) of something that has taken place. It should also be used, however, as an essential element of the engagement process both to evaluate the quality of an engagement plan, prior to any engagement taking place and at appropriate times throughout the process.

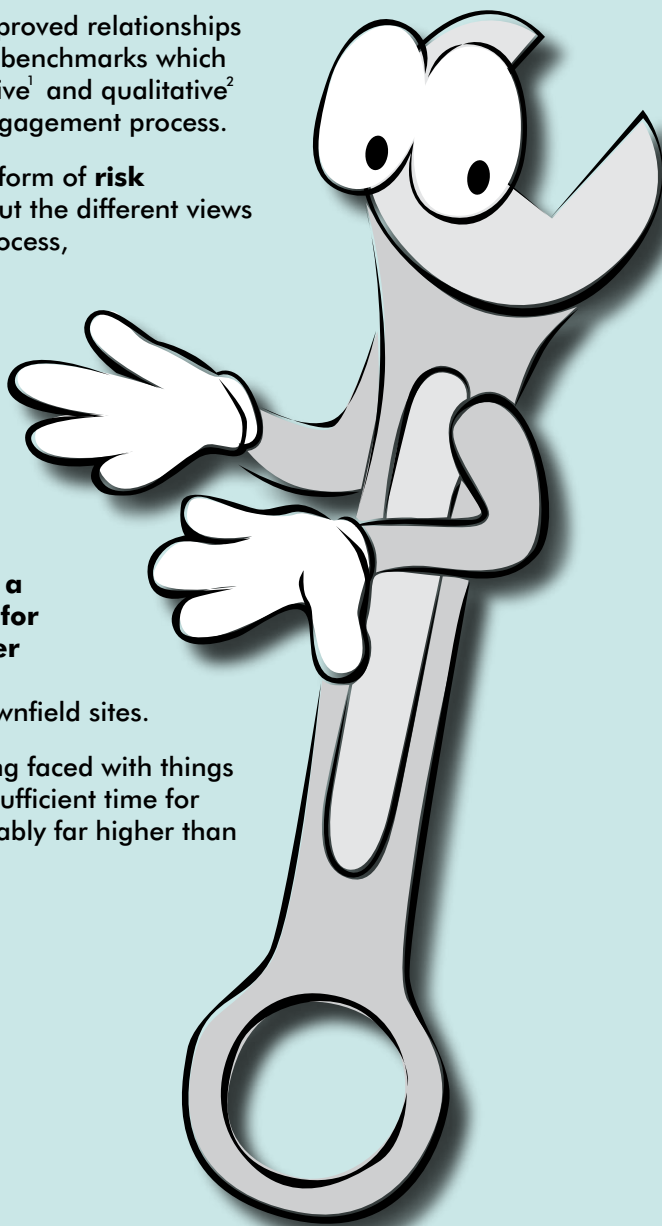
This evaluation can be an independent process, working alongside the participatory process, or an integral part of “managing” the process.

As some outcomes will be intangible (such as improved relationships or a “sense of empowerment”), it is useful to set benchmarks which can be measured against. Ideally, both quantitative<sup>1</sup> and qualitative<sup>2</sup> techniques would have been employed in the engagement process.

A robust review process can also be an effective form of **risk management**. This is because it helps to map out the different views held by different stakeholders at the start of a process, and provides recognition (and awareness) of the potential challenges that the engagement process may face.

Inclusion of a review process can increase costs - especially if it is commissioned and managed independently of the central engagement process. This added cost may be difficult to justify when cost savings are being sought. Nonetheless, it is widely argued that **a good review process is more than just a useful tool; but rather an essential criterion for the effective management of any stakeholder engagement process**. This is especially true of “inherently uncertain environments” such as brownfield sites.

The costs of **not** accounting for the risk, and being faced with things going wrong, as often happens when there is insufficient time for proper reviews as the process unfolds, are invariably far higher than the cost of ongoing review.



<sup>1</sup> **Quantitative** methods involve collecting numbers for measurement and judgement

<sup>2</sup> **Qualitative** methods involve collecting data from people to allow description and interpretation



## Interval/Mid-term Review

For on-going or long-term participative initiatives it is good practice to plan for regular review periods where checks are repeatedly made as to whether the process is meeting the purpose agreed at the start. This can happen through the regular design/delivery of team meetings. This approach is especially useful if the team undertaking the analysis has a broad knowledge of other methods available so that if the current approach is not working an alternative method can be used.

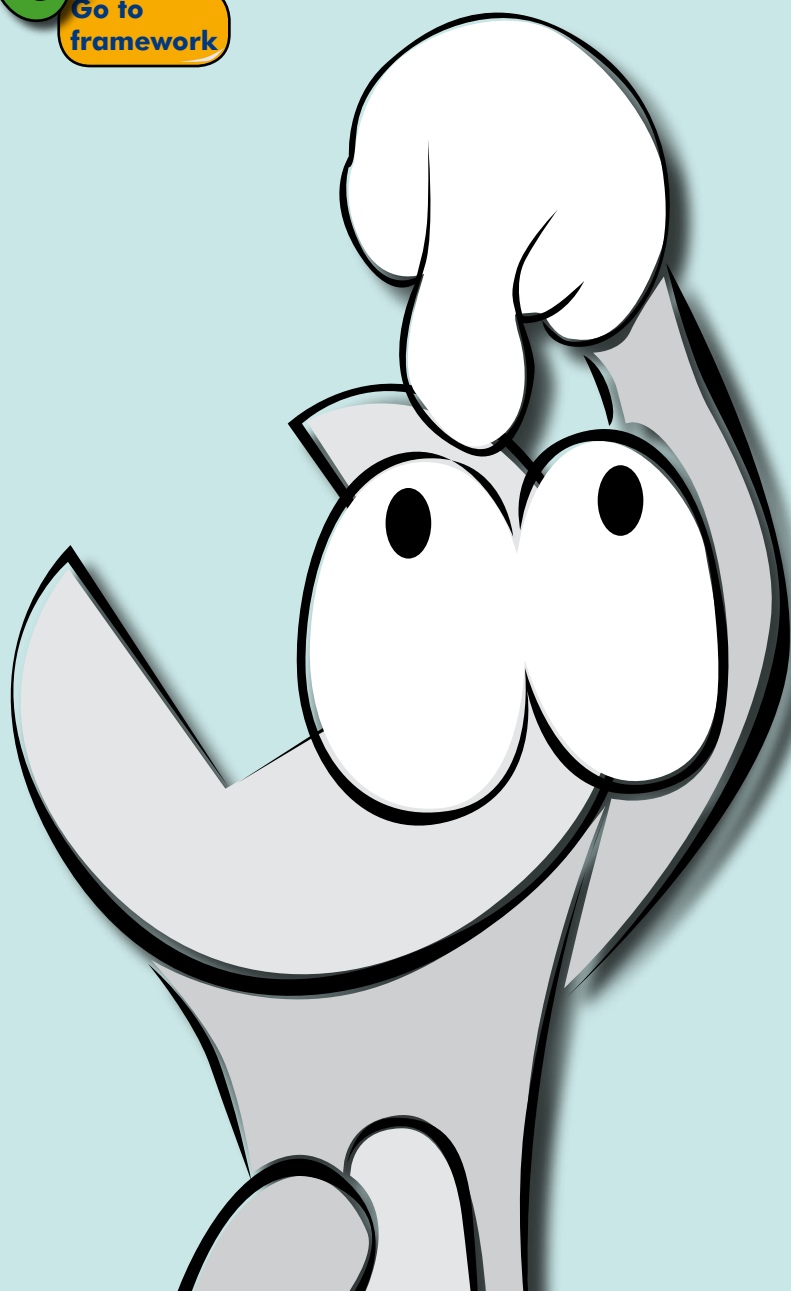
A structured review process is critical to ensuring that the “learning” is gathered from the work as it happens, and that the engagement plan is flexible enough to cope with unforeseen circumstances as they arise.



Return to  
flowchart



Go to  
framework



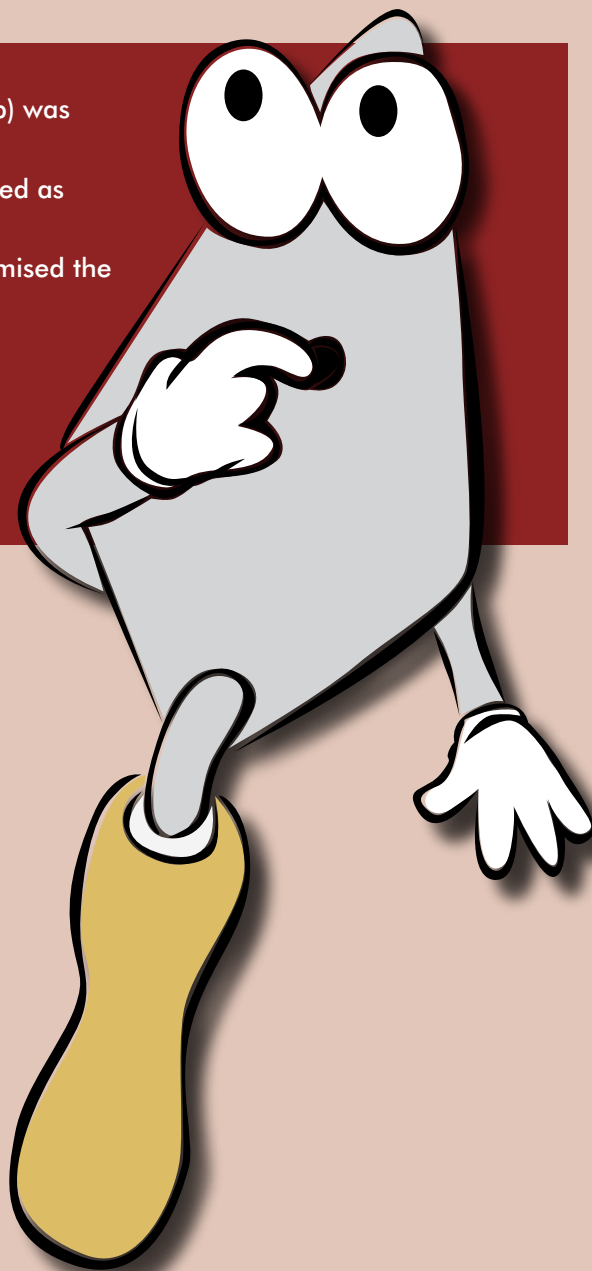
## E. FINAL EVALUATION

A final evaluation will need to assess the following key criterion:

- Whether the (engagement) process met its own aims (i.e. desired outcomes) and originally agreed purpose
- Whether the process met the explicit and implicit demands of the participants
- Whether the process met the standards of “good practice” in participatory working

The final evaluation may also aim to evaluate whether:

- the level of participation (e.g. consultation or partnership) was appropriate to the context and type of participants
- the methods and techniques were appropriate and worked as expected
- the level and range of responses from participants legitimised the exercise
- the costs were reasonable and within budget
- what was produced and organised (i.e. outputs) helped towards achieving the desired outcomes
- the ways in which the responses from the process (such as recommendations) were effectively dealt with.



## STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PROCESS EVALUATION MATRIX

Elements to include		1 (strong)	2	3	4 (weak)
<b>SCOPING PROCESS</b>	Clear evidence of purpose, scope, context, stakeholder identification and desired outcomes.				
<b>Purpose</b>	Clearly defined aims and objectives, agreed by all parties involved in commissioning it. Clear how the outputs will be used to ensure the desired <b>outcomes</b> are achieved.				
<b>Scope</b>	Clear specific boundaries to the exercise. Level of engagement clearly defined. Elements identified that can or cannot be changed. Potential risks thoroughly identified & evaluated.				
<b>Context</b>	Wider issues detailed and communicated to participants early on, i.e historical, political, physical and cultural context of the issue. Links with past or present related activities, organisations or consultations, policy legal or decision-making parameters, timescale constraints, participants' characteristics and capabilities.				
<b>Stakeholder Identification</b>	Transparent and documented stakeholder identification process using a contacts database and based on a coherent understanding of the purpose and the context of the process. Tries to include all appropriate stakeholders in relevant parts of the process, including hard-to-reach groups. Statutory consultees identified.				
<b>Desired Outcomes</b>	Clarity on exactly what is sought as a result of the engagement process, and consideration given to the most appropriate methods to achieve this.				
<b>INSTITUTIONAL BUY-IN</b>	Key decision-makers in the organisation are fully informed and supportive of the engagement plan.				
<b>ENGAGEMENT PLAN</b>	Based on the result of the scoping process & has the backing of institutional support. Clear details documented on all the main components of the Stakeholder Engagement process, including clear outline of organisational logistics & review schedule & evaluation of plan before engagement.				
<b>Methods</b>	Different methodologies researched & selected to be appropriate to the issues and respective stakeholders. Careful planning for methods to be complementary and work together to make the overall process successful.				
<b>Resources</b>	Budget allocation sufficient to undertake an engagement process that will achieve desired outcomes. Clear roles and responsibilities detailed and time-lined for all involved in running the process. Those with appropriate skills allocated & if necessary trained to undertake specific tasks.				
<b>Time Schedule</b>	Realistic time allocations, including that needed between events for work to be completed and to be taken to the next stage. Key dates, actions & decision deadlines detailed.				
<b>Outputs</b>	Clear & tangible outputs agreed prior to engagement activity and aligned with specific methodologies to lead to the desired outcome of the engagement process. Intrinsic outputs secondary to achieving overall outcomes included.				
<b>ENGAGEMENT PROCESS</b>	There is an iterative and flexible approach to managing the process that would help in responding to the unpredictable. This is informed through an ongoing review process.				
<b>REVIEW PROCESS</b>	The review process is iterative and structured to inform those involved in the engagement process (and others) with the information to judge whether or not the process is likely to be, or has been, a success, to manage risk and to make responsive amendments to the process. Contains qualitative and quantitative evaluation criteria.				
<b>FINAL EVALUATION</b>	Evaluates if the process achieved its desired outcomes through appropriate level and methods of engagement, involving appropriate outputs, stakeholders, and use of budget & staff resources, effective response to feedback. Includes log of lessons learnt for future engagements.				

LESSONS LEARNED LOG

PROJECT:		
ITEM	ISSUE	CORRECTIVE ACTION

## **Useful Publications**

Alan Barr & Stuart Hashagen; ABCD Handbook, a framework for evaluating community development; Community Development Foundation Publications (2000)

Alan Barr & Stuart Hashagen; ABCD Trainers' Resource Pack; community Development Foundation Publications (2000)

Christine Sylvest Larsen; Facilitating community involvement: practical guidance for practitioners and policy makers; The Research, Development and Statistics directorate (2004)

David Wilcox; The Guide to Effective Participation; Delta Press (1994)

Friends of the Earth; Briefing; Environmental Law Foundation (2003)

G.Chanan, A.West, C.Garratt, J.Humm; Regeneration and Sustainable Communities; Community Development Foundation Publications (1999)

Gabriel Chanan; Local Community Involvement, A Handbook for Good Practice; European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (1999)

Guidance on enhancing public participation in local government

Involve Working Paper 1; Exploring Public Participation Approaches (2005)

Julie Lewis & Perry Walker; Participation; New Economics Foundation (1998)

Listen Up; (1999)

Liverpool County Council; Strategic Framework For Community Development; SCCD (2001)

M. Taylor, A. Barr & A.West; Signposts to Community Development (second edition); Community Development Foundation Publications (1992)

Nick Wates; The Community Planning Handbook; Earthscan Publications Ltd. (2000)

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister; Planning, Creating Local Development Frameworks A Companion Guide to PPS12

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister; Statements of Community Involvement and Planning Applications (2004)

P. Shiner, D. Woolfe & P.Stokes; Environmental Action, a guide for individuals and communities; Environmental Law Foundation Publications (2002)

Paul Henderson & David N.Thomas; Skills in Neighbourhood Work; Routledge (2003)

Planning, Consultation Paper on planning policy statement 1: creating sustainable communities; Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

Rupa Sarkar & Alison West; The LSP Guide; Community Development Foundation Publications (2003)

The Audit Commission; Connecting with users and citizens –User Focus; The Audit Commission (2003)

The Audit Commission; User focus and Citizen engagement, learning from comprehensive performance assessment; briefing 4.

The Audit Commission; User Focus and Citizen Engagement; The Audit Commission (2003)

The Home Office; Community Cohesion Advice for those designing, developing and delivering Area Based Initiatives (ABIs); Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2003)

