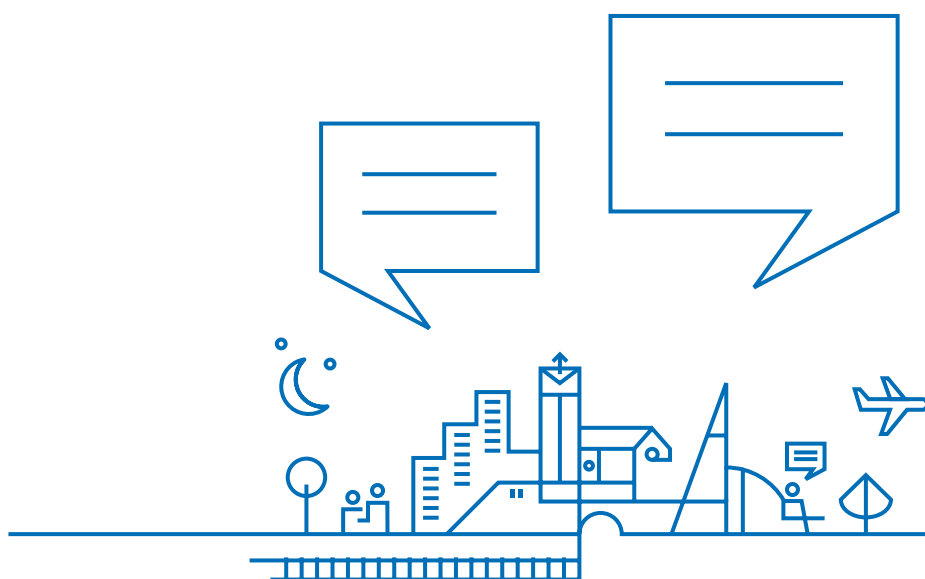


Impact Assessment Outlook Journal

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Public Participation, Stakeholder Engagement and Impact Assessment

Thought pieces from UK and international practice



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Public Participation, Stakeholder Engagement and Impact Assessment

Public participation is fundamental to Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). However, compliance with the basic legislative requirements for consultation is one thing, but to be effective, engagement must also be carefully planned, tailored to each proposal and Impact Assessment (IA) process, and follow some well-established principles. This volume sets out some of these principles, and asks questions about why, how, and with whom engagement is necessary, and what makes for good practice engagement on the ground, including use of a wide range of techniques to meet various engagement objectives.

Opening with an overview of the importance of effective engagement in EIA, Kate Goodwin (Spawforths) sets out the framework for effective engagement, summarising key issues in practice from timeframes to logistics, and what improved engagement looks like. Kate draws on tools such as the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) spectrum, and concludes with a summary of why improved engagement matters in EIA.

Laurence Bowyer (Mott MacDonald) provides an overview of techniques and methods for public participation and stakeholder engagement, from aligning with the Gunning Principles to stakeholder identification, messaging, and consideration of multiple stakeholder engagement communication channels. Laurence reinforces the importance of closing the loop and providing feedback in a continuous manner to ensure meaningful participation.

Naushad Tahsildar (RPS) explores the digital-hybrid approach in more detail, highlighting a range of reasons why it is fundamental to embrace both online and in-

person engagement and communications in approaches to EIA.

Another commonly used technique in EIA, Consultative Committees, are dissected by Margaret Harvie (PlanCom), who sets out how these operate in the Australian context (NSW) from a Chair's perspective.

Diana Pound provides an insight into diversity, inclusive practices, and consideration of power. Diana advocates for more deliberative approaches to navigate these components of engagement practice and the institutional structures within which much of EIA works.

By exploring an emerging area for building an understanding of inclusivity, Kathryn Collins (Howell Marine Consulting) gives an insight into Neurodivergent Stakeholder Engagement and how to improve access to EIA for neurodivergent people. She suggests some simple adjustments for better engagement, which may be illuminating since it reaches a great many

more participants than more aggregated or standard approaches to engagement. These are simple suggestions that can have great impact.

The role of Environmental Outcome Reports in measuring meaningful engagement (including implications of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill) are set out by Nicola Parker (MOD). Nicola draws on international best practice in Canada to highlight the extensive benefits good engagement can have, including in post-consent processes, and the effect this can have in building community buy-in and acceptance to changes affecting their communities.

Concluding the series of articles, Rachel Pechey (Mott MacDonald) sets out the future of public participation and stakeholder engagement in Impact Assessment,

considering people as central to all Impact Assessment efforts, ensuring social outcomes, improving accessibility and drawing on lessons learned from a case study to emphasise what this looks like in practice.

The articles in this Journal have been written by a range of practitioners and IEMA members, and all authors should be congratulated for providing thought-provoking pieces which tell a story of the current state of engagement practice in the UK and further afield. They draw on the rich experience of the authors and the sectors within which they work, including EIA, SEA and many other areas of practice. This is a useful foray through the challenges of ensuring that good practice participation becomes a standard way of operating in Impact Assessment practice.

The importance of effective public engagement in EIA consultation

In EIA, there is a duty to give the public an opportunity to make representations but, in practice, this is often a token gesture that benefits neither the public affected by the development nor the proponent carrying out the consultation.

EIA legislation in the UK requires the Environmental Statement (ES) to be publicised, but this places the emphasis on public participation at the end of the process, rather than focusing on proactively engaging with the public throughout the process. This is problematic, since preparing and developing an ES is an intrinsically iterative process, and benefits from engagement with key stakeholders from the outset.

Issues

Public engagement in the UK typically follows the pattern of a physical public exhibition shortly before submission, storing a physical copy in a public location, and uploading the documents onto the Local Authority website. These traditional methods lead to a number of accessibility issues that can disempower the public, including:

- venue accessibility for exhibitions and physical copies;
- computer access, including skills and file size limitations;
- ease of navigation of physical and digital documents, especially where digital copies are split into multiple smaller files;

- language and readability of technical documents, including lack of plain English or availability of documents in other languages.

Where such issues are not taken into account early when designing consultation, public engagement with the ES process can be reduced, such as through limiting the number of people providing feedback, or reducing their ability to effectively interpret and respond to the material presented. This in turn can have negative impacts on the quality and usefulness of the feedback, and may undermine the public's trust that their involvement is integral to the ES process.

For example, where the public may not have been fully empowered to engage with the technical details or design of a development, their comments may relate only to their opinions on the principle of development (whether they object or support the idea of development), rather than providing qualitative, constructive feedback on any changes, or sharing valuable local knowledge that may influence and improve the scheme.

In these situations, the public may become overly focused on the principle of the scheme and, if they object to the principle, the engagement process may become more adversarial rather than operating as a forum to express opinions on how the scheme may be shaped or improved to become more acceptable to particular sections of the community, or the community as a whole.

Further to this, where factors that have shaped the design evolution or the key constraints and opportunities have not been presented in an accessible manner, the

Figure 1: The IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation

IAP2's Spectrum of Public Participation was designed to assist with the selection of the level of participation that defines the public's role in any public participation process. The Spectrum is used internationally, and it is found in public participation plans around the world.

INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION					
	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

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public may lack confidence in the technical team's understanding of the locality. This may lead to the community feeling the development is being imposed on them by 'experts' perceived as lacking local knowledge, which may further increase public resistance to the scheme.

What does improved public engagement look like?

The IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation¹ (Figure 1) sets out how the level of public participation impacts a decision: increased public participation increases the impact the public has on a decision, or, in this case, a development. Standard methods of consultation lean towards simply 'informing' or 'consulting' the public on this spectrum, resulting in the public having limited impact on the ES process or the design evolution of development.

Increased participation increases impact on the decision which, in this context, means that where the public is engaged from the outset using suitable methods that improve their understanding of and engagement with the information presented, there is greater opportunity for qualitative and quantitative improvements in public participation. This may positively impact the ES process and ultimate scheme design, to the benefit of both the public and the proponent of the scheme.

It is important to consider what methods of consultation are most appropriate in each case, taking into account local demographics and how various groups are best reached. Methods to consider in addition to the requirements in the *UK Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017* may include:

1 IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation @International Association for Public Participation www.iap2.org. https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.iap2.org/resource/resmgr/pillars/Spectrum_8.5x11_Print.pdf

- digital consultation methods;
- ensuring Non-Technical Summaries use plain English, rather than being summarised by technical specialists;
- taking consultation events into public settings such as on the street or in shopping centres;
- publicising consultation in a variety of media beyond the standard notice in a local newspaper;
- interactive methods of engaging the public such as site walks and workshops; and
- emphasising how local issues have been identified and influenced the design, and why public feedback matters and how it can make a difference.

Why does improved public engagement matter?

Social responsibility is a fundamental reason to improve public participation, but it can also be an important element of risk management. Sincere, effective, proactive public engagement increases trust in the proponent of the scheme and therefore the proposed development, reducing conflict through the determination phase.

Proactively engaging the public and improving understanding enables the public to have informed opinions, and improves quality of feedback which then forms the basis of a dialogue between the project team and local community.

Qualitative, comprehensive feedback beyond 'support' or 'object' can give early warning of issues important to the community, allowing them to be addressed in design terms or appropriate justification and messaging to be prepared. This in turn can reduce objections and increase support, reducing risks associated with public objections and improving outcomes for the local community.

“Social responsibility is a fundamental reason to improve public participation, but it can also be an important element of risk management.”

Fewer objections leads to a smoother determination process, requiring fewer resources such as time and cost of PR services or further technical assessment. There is also reduced risk of politically motivated decision-making which can lead to refusals and expensive, time-consuming appeals.

Conclusion

Effective public participation is important in terms of social responsibility and risk management. Using appropriate engagement methods that are designed in response to local demographics is key to reaping the benefits, but requires planning from the project inception. A well-executed programme of public engagement can provide significant benefits including a more informed EIA process, improved quality of development, smoother decision-making, and decreased project risk including on costs and timescales.

Techniques and methods for public participation and stakeholder engagement in Impact Assessment (IA)

Introduction

Effective Impact Assessment (IA) depends on successful public participation and stakeholder engagement. Public participation is defined by Involve as, 'the engagement of individuals with the various structures and institutions of democracy, including voting, contacting a political representative, campaigning and lobbying, and taking part in consultations and demonstrations.'² In IA, public participation entails promoters involving communities in identifying scheme opportunities, potential adverse impacts and mitigation approaches.

Stakeholder engagement is defined as, 'taking into consideration the different interests and values stakeholders have and addressing them throughout the project or campaign'.³ During IA, stakeholder engagement involves liaison with parties affected by, or interested in, a scheme (i.e., in IA a scheme is a single proposal or potential project in infrastructure, for example, put forward by a promoter for assessment and consultation). The key difference between public participation and stakeholder engagement is that the former encompasses the broad public, whereas the latter suggests different types of organisations and individuals, which may include the public as a whole. Thus we use the terms

interchangeably for the most part.

Both public participation and stakeholder engagement are critical to scheme development across sectors as they enable promoters to demonstrate effective outreach to promote the proposals. This helps to progress the scheme more smoothly as well as providing better scheme solutions through participatory design and delivery. Effective stakeholder outreach and ongoing engagement rely on building strong stakeholder relationships based on trust and confidence.

Productive stakeholder relationships during IA (i.e., two-way, collaborative and trusting relations between promoter and stakeholder) are maintained through effective communications and reduce project risks including delays, cost overruns and reputational damage. The following techniques and methods are essential tools to maximising public participation and effective stakeholder engagement:

- alignment with the Gunning Principles;⁴
- stakeholder identification;
- relevant stakeholder messaging;

² Public Participation | Involve accessed 22/10/2022. Involve is 'the UK's leading public participation charity' that works with governments, parliaments, civil society and the public to create new forms of public participation that improves decision-making.

³ Ensuring Effective Stakeholder Engagement | Government Communication Service accessed 22/10/2022

⁴ Rules: The Gunning Principles | Local Government Association accessed 22/10/2022; Citizen Participation: A Critical Look at the Democratic Adequacy of Government Consultations, John Morrison, Oxford Journal of Legal Studies, Volume 37, Issue 3, Autumn 2017, Pages 654, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ojls/gqx007>

- multiple stakeholder engagement channels;
- continuous stakeholder feedback loop.

Alignment with the Gunning Principles

Evidence of effective and compliant stakeholder engagement in the UK is essential to align with the Gunning Principles and planning consultation requirements. Scheme promoters who fail to comply with the Gunning Principles in the UK risk attracting objections that could lead to scheme delays or failure during planning. The Gunning Principles require that:

1. consultation must be at a time when proposals are still at a formative stage;
2. the promoter must give sufficient reasons for any proposal to permit intelligent consideration and response;
3. adequate time is given for consideration and response; and
4. the product of consultation is conscientiously taken into account when finalising the decision.⁵

Stakeholder identification

Stakeholders should be identified using various elements including location, demographics and existing relationships/perspectives. Identified stakeholders could include government departments, local authorities, technical bodies and affected landholders. Effective public participation and stakeholder engagement during IA are dependent on the correct stakeholders being identified in order to establish the most appropriate and effective messaging and channels.

Relevant stakeholder messaging

Following stakeholder identification, a scheme promoter should understand existing relationships, likely scheme perspectives and the political climate. Messaging should align with scheme objectives, local considerations and stakeholder views. Through targeted messaging, promoters can enhance a scheme's profile to maximise public participation and effective stakeholder engagement in IA.

Multiple stakeholder engagement channels

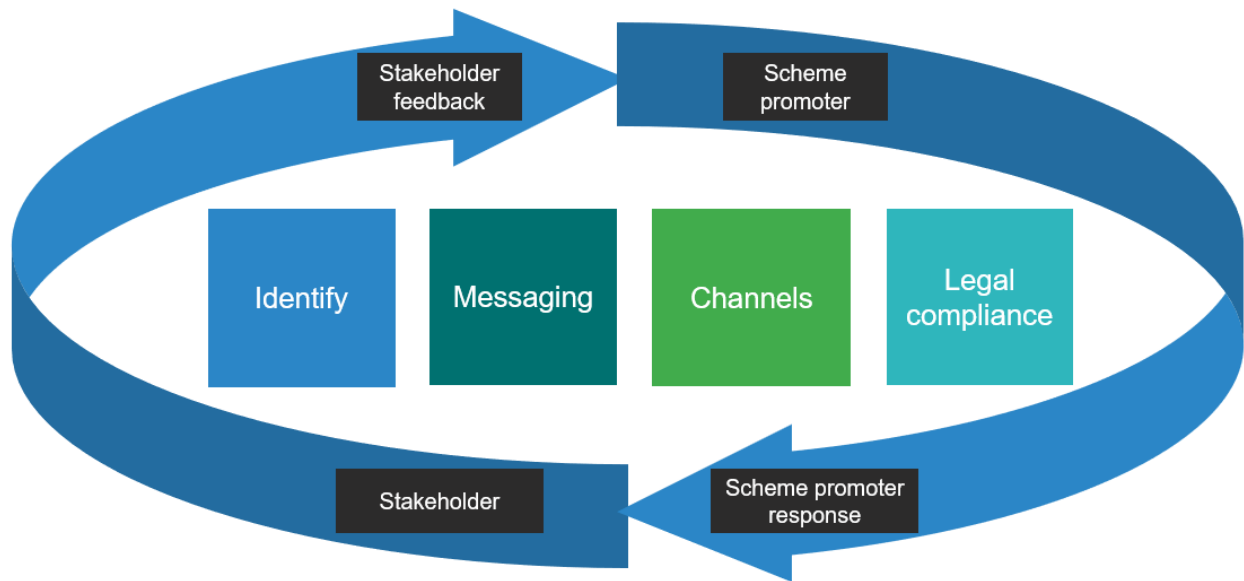
COVID-19 has encouraged practitioners to rethink public participation and stakeholder engagement approaches. It is no longer appropriate to rely solely on conventional methods including public exhibitions, letter drops and printed media. Digital methods (e.g., virtual engagement platforms, websites and social media) are increasingly effective in encouraging public participation and stakeholder engagement.

Conventional channels

Public exhibitions are typically face-to-face events attended by the public and stakeholders to view scheme information and provide feedback to project team members. This feedback is used to inform IAs. Letter drops entail a letter and feedback form being mailed to all addresses within an identified consultation 'zone' local to the scheme. Feedback forms are issued so the public and stakeholders can respond formally. Postal feedback is issued to scheme personnel for analysis that feeds into a consultation report and project team members to inform IAs.

⁵ Rules: The Gunning Principles | Local Government Association accessed 04/10/2022; Citizen Participation: A Critical Look at the Democratic Adequacy of Government Consultations, John Morrison, Oxford Journal of Legal Studies, Volume 37, Issue 3, Autumn 2017, Pages 636–659, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ojls/gqx007>

Figure 2: Continuous feedback loop process⁶



Digital channels

Virtual engagement platforms involve a website hosting scheme information and feedback forms online with possible chat box functions to directly speak to project team members. Websites may simply include scheme information and an online feedback form. Social media such as Facebook and Instagram can also be used to promote consultation events during IA.

Hybrid

Hybrid approaches can maximise public participation and effective stakeholder engagement by optimising potential outreach across all audiences through a combination of conventional and digital channels.

Continuous stakeholder feedback loop

A continuous stakeholder feedback loop entails involving and embedding the public and stakeholders in scheme design and delivery. Through continuous feedback from the public and stakeholders, scheme promoters can optimise the scheme design and increase understanding and support for the scheme during IA.

“Through continuous feedback from the public and stakeholders, scheme promoters can optimise the scheme design and increase understanding and support for the scheme during IA.”

⁶ Figure source: Mott MacDonald 2022

Case study: Continuous stakeholder engagement feedback loop during IA

Holyhead Border Control Post, Welsh Government, 2021

Mott MacDonald supported the Welsh Government in undertaking technical engagement with stakeholders including Natural Resources Wales and Cadw regularly on the Holyhead Border Control Post design. Through liaison with stakeholders, the Welsh Government designed an optimised scheme including reduced building dimensions and enhanced landscaping. This shows the value of an effective continuous stakeholder engagement feedback loop.

Conclusion

Techniques and methods that enable high levels of public participation and effective stakeholder engagement during IA are essential to successful scheme design and delivery. Gaining the trust and confidence of stakeholders so schemes can progress with wide support is dependent on the promoter employing techniques and methods that drive wide-ranging outreach and meaningful stakeholder engagement. The approach also limits project risks of delays, cost overruns and reputational damage.

The need for a 'digital-hybrid approach' to engagement

'Effective communication' is the term often used as a pre-requisite and must-have for any engagement. There are various definitions of effective communication and a good one in the context of EIA can be described as:

... the process of exchange of intention, knowledge, information, thoughts and opinions using studies, data and appropriate evidence so that the communicated message is received and understood with clarity and purpose.⁷

This definition suggests complexity in the exchange and dissemination of information. EIAs are increasingly large and complex documents, often running into thousands of pages. Their size is likely to increase in the future as the pressure on evidence grows and new technical subjects are added, e.g., Human Rights Impacts and Health Impact Assessment. Thus, statutory EIA engagement gets more complicated with more information and data to be presented and consulted upon.

Connected technology is now becoming essential, with the COVID-19 pandemic strengthening dependency on it. As a result, the line between the digital and physical is increasingly becoming blurred—there are now close to half a billion people using the Internet, with Internet penetration standing at 62.5% of the world's total population and, currently, more than two-thirds (67.1%) of the world's population now uses a mobile phone.⁸ There are significant changes in how people now search for information, spending more time using social media, and on average ~7 hours a day using the Internet.⁹

"Simply put, the traditional ways of undertaking the consultation process need to be overhauled and new, hybrid ways of delivering the consultation process need to be adopted to achieve effective and constructive engagement on projects."

Stakeholders are now used to quicker ways of working, reading, getting informed and providing feedback. Simply put, the traditional ways of undertaking the consultation process need to be overhauled and new, hybrid ways of delivering the consultation process need to be adopted to achieve effective and constructive engagement on projects.

The future is the 'digital-hybrid approach' to engagement

As people advance towards a more digital life, it has become clear that combining digital and physical consultations is the way forward—the 'new norm', since it benefits the entire process. Technology should be actively embraced as it helps to achieve effective communication and, as a result, better engagement.

⁷ Adapted from <https://theinvestorsbook.com/effective-communication.html>

⁸ <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2022-global-overview-report>

⁹ <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2022-global-overview-report>

A common practice of thinking that a digital approach to consultation is merely uploading lots of documents on a website for viewing can be misleading. It may tick the box as part of statutory requirements, but wouldn't necessarily tick boxes for effective communication and/or engagement. The future incorporates a 'digital-hybrid' approach and is fast becoming a necessity rather than an additional or optional feature.

So, what exactly is a 'digital-hybrid' approach to engagement? It is a 'value-added approach' to a consultation process using a variety of tools and processes for effective communication and engagement. These tools are complementary to an already established statutory consultation process and empowers one to transform data and information into compelling, easy-to-understand information with interactive elements. There are various digital tools which can be considered for the digital-hybrid approach. Some of these are:

Use of integrated digital engagement platforms. There are several online digital engagement platforms which can be custom designed, providing EIA information in a bespoke manner enabling broader community conversations. Information can easily be structured in a thematic manner and users have the ability to understand the project and issues spatially, uncover information and assessment by environmental issues and search and filter technical information in a seamless way. Given information is provided in real-time, the engagement is much faster and more productive – solutions can be provided quickly, based on feedback. There are other benefits such as attracting a larger target audience and use of interactive tools such as community heatmaps where users can spatially drop 'pins' to add suggestions.

Use of content creation platforms. The rise of 'low code'/'no code' content creation platforms has revolutionised the way webpages are now designed. These platforms can be used to create bespoke, interactive and engaging content for consultation and can be integrated with other platforms. As these are low code, they require little or no skill in web design and can be created very quickly.

Use of geospatial web page/website. Digital geospatial webpage/websites can display mapping, results from surveys (and other information) in a structured way, and provide interactivity for users. Geospatial maps have evolved significantly. There are a range of maps currently available, from 3D terrain maps to high-resolution digital imagery, including 3D PDF maps. Information can also be presented in a creative way, giving maps and other information a lot more meaning compared to conventional formats. These geospatial web pages can be standalone or linked with digital engagement platforms.

Use of creative info-graphics. The IEMA Digital Impact Assessment Primer (May 2020) highlighted the importance of technology use in Impact Assessment and set out digital principles which help in effective consultation. One of these is critical here: creative info-graphics, using concise visual representations of technical information and processes to express complex ideas and diverse data as simple conceptual diagrams. They can be static or interactive/dynamic, and comprise data/charts, images or illustrations and icons alongside text. Once developed, these can be used within the above-mentioned platforms for effective consultation.

Use of digital dashboards and various multimedia. Interactive digital dashboards are gaining popularity as live data can be provided and shared across multiple users. These are extremely useful for large projects where information is provided at different stages. Use of various multimedia such as videos, animation, virtual reality, interactive tools, QR codes and gamification pave a new way for consultation and engagement.

The use of the above digital tools in addition to statutory documents make a significant difference to the engagement process and lean towards a more engaged and effective consultation process.

As a final point, it is important to note that at the core of a digital-hybrid approach is the ability to quickly provide the 'right level of information' to the stakeholder so as to effectively engage with them and receive constructive feedback in time.

Community Consultative Committees – A traditional solution to some current issues in engagement in Impact Assessment

Having a group of representatives from the community meet regularly with proponents to act as an interface between a project and the community is a traditional method in the context of Environmental Impact Assessment in Australia. This article explores how this technique supports Impact Assessment (IA) and can serve to overcome some of the common pitfalls or concerns about engagement around complex projects and their impacts.

In the search for new methods to respond to common IA and engagement challenges, it may be that some methods that tackle traditional but ever-recurring concerns are overlooked.

In the Australian State of New South Wales, the government has formalised Community Consultative Committees (CCC) to be in place as part of project conditions for the approval of a project and the associated Environmental Impact Assessment. Conditions for large projects with community angst or strict environmental impacts require the proponent to fund and support independent CCCs as a means of ongoing community liaison.

“As a Chairperson, I have come to appreciate the value of these consultative committees, which is in their independence, resulting in a more level playing field for community input.”

The CCC membership is selected by the independent Chair who is appointed by the government (not the proponent) to facilitate the group. The value is that the community and proponent will be working together and will need to have a relationship, sometimes through the planning approval stage, but importantly in the design and construction stages and into the operational stage. They meet to discuss project matters of interest to the community and the proponent, including impacts and opportunities.

These CCCs have the potential to overcome some of the common pitfalls of engagement, and provide a means to overcome them, as follows:

Table 1 - Engagement issues and how CCCs can help

Common engagement pitfalls	How CCCs might help
We only hear from the usual suspects	<p>They provide for a 'representative sample' from the community. While this participation opportunity is 'self-selecting' and can attract 'usual suspects', selection of the CCC can serve diversity of thinking if not diversity in who is selected/nominated.</p> <p>While a proponent might choose like-minded and supportive participants, an independent Chair will focus on creating a fair and transparent process that allows for robust discussion through diversity of views and perspectives in relation to the impacts.</p> <p>While one or two 'usual suspects' may often find their way to CCC membership there is a balance of views in discussion about proponent activity/impacts.</p>
Trust of community, government and proponents	<p>With diminishing levels of trust both from proponents to community and vice versa, the establishment of CCCs can build and maintain relationships. In addition to being able to ask for information from the proponent, CCCs can request and explore information about the State Government's monitoring and mitigation measures after the approval.</p>
People are not able to understand complex issues	<p>Some of the issues introduced to the community are complex. The existence of a group that can meet, be presented with information and build expertise in the topic over time may overcome proponents' uncertainty about the capability of communities in dealing with complex issues. With the luxury of meetings being held over a duration, there is time to explain and help the group understand. The CCC members can then explain complex issues or reassure other community members that issues are being managed in appropriate ways and with transparency.</p>
Proponents frame the issues for discussion with the community without reference to the community	<p>The NSW government guidelines for the conduct of the CCCs¹⁰ provide for these committees to determine the agenda for meetings (within the constraints of the matters relevant to the project). The independence of the appointment of the CCC members can also allow for greater levels of freedom in what people might raise as issues.</p>

So, what are the pitfalls of having these groups? They include:

- Proponents can lean on this as their only method to engage the community, leading to lost opportunity to engage a much wider group of participants.
- Community members who represent a group may feel that they have more power than those on the CCC as individuals. How do we manage this or test accountability in that representation?
- Frustration for members who are also activists who need to be answerable to the rules of the group. There is, by necessity, usually a diversity of views in the group and, as a result, CCC members are asked not to represent their membership of the CCC in advocating within the community, i.e., via media.

As a Chairperson, I have come to appreciate the value of these consultative committees, which is in their independence, resulting in a more level playing field for community input. They are essentially a forum that is for the community with a gate-keeper facilitator (Chairperson) to ensure fairness in what can sometimes be a robust discussion. I am proud to report that I have been able to create a stronger voice than what might sometimes be present in similar consultations that might be more like 'tick the box' exercises.

¹⁰ Guidelines for Community Consultative Committees in NSW January 2019, <https://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/Assess-and-Regulate/Development-Assessment/Community-Consultative-Committees>

Diversity, inclusion, power and deliberation

Inclusive engagement has two aspects: power and inclusivity. Factoring both into engagement and participation planning ensures that inclusive engagement is genuine and meaningful and not mere superficial, bolt-on, tokenism. If little power has been shared then all that has been achieved is a more diverse group of people have had their time wasted!

Sharing more power with a greater diversity of people has many benefits.

- Better informed decisions: outcomes are better informed from a much broader range of knowledge with wiser decisions resulting from diverse knowledges.¹¹
- Creative solutions findings: people are more open-minded and creative if they are working (safely) in a diverse setting.¹²
- Social justice: Those who were previously seldom heard are also often those who experience the worst environmental risks of pollution, flooding, fire, noise and degraded landscapes.
- Potential to harness a wider array of resources for change and find opportunities for co-design and co-delivery of different aspects of the change.
- Sense checking solutions so that otherwise unforeseen outcomes are seen and can be factored in if they are positive or designed out if they are not.

¹¹ Critchlow, H. 2022 *Joined up thinking: the Science of Collective Intelligence and its Power to Change our Lives* Hodder & Staughton; Surowiecki, J. 2004 *The Wisdom of Crowds: Why the Many Are Smarter Than the Few and How Collective Wisdom Shapes Business, Economies, Societies and Nations* Anchor Books, New York

¹² Robson, D. 2019 *The Intelligence Trap – Revolutionise your thinking and make wiser decisions*. Hodder and Staughton

¹³ These characteristics include age, gender reassignment, being married or in a civil partnership, being pregnant or on maternity leave, disability, race including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.

“Sharing more power with a greater diversity of people has many benefits.”

What does diversity and inclusion mean?

Inclusive engagement and participation goes far beyond the protected characteristics championed by Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion initiatives.¹³ There are myriad factors that can exclude people. Understanding these and working to overcome barriers results in many more voices shaping and influencing the future. Figure 3 lists the kind of barriers Dialogue Matters has come across in 20 years of designing and facilitating at all levels of governance and throughout the world.

There are those who don't want visibility but still impact the environment: foragers and harvesters, off roaders and in the UK (where there is restricted countryside access) wild trespass, swimmers and campers, and those participating in criminal activities such as smuggling, wildlife crime, blood sports, drug use, sex, fly tipping, or pollution.

Figure 3: Barriers to inclusion

These barriers are solved in design of participation and engagement processes			
Culture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language • Different parts of society – conventional and alternative, rural and town etc • Ethnicities together? • Men and women together? • Religious observance • Not having the networks and connections to be known or know what is going on 	Availability <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time • Carers • Commuters • Teachers • Night workers • Self-employed • Farmers and fishers • Busy times of day, week or year 	Age <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children and young people (safeguarding requirements) • Seniors 	Access to take part <p>Face to face:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transport • Distance • Cost <p>Online:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internet • IT equipment • Signal • Skills • Screen size
These barriers are solved in how events are facilitated			
Psychological <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confidence to have your say • Not being listened to or actively silenced before • Sense of security and safety • Decision deficit (systemic poverty) 	Type of education/ status <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literacy • Little formal education • Those with many degrees • Social status • Roles e.g., Directors, Experts 	Special requirements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hearing • Seeing • Standing • Wheelchair user • Coping in groups • Anxiety • Shielding • Neurodiversity • Mental health or conditions 	Interpersonal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tension • Conflict • Exclusion • Threats • Poor past history

There is also the need to include different types of knowledge, for example, by thinking about functions: resource users, residents, regulators, funders, or customers; and by interests: water, recreation, food, nature conservation, planning, development, business, etc.

What about power?

Power is a complex and multifaceted concept and it is always contested.¹⁴ Power is held by groups and individuals differently in different contexts and moments. It is not a fixed zero-sum game – if you have more power it doesn't have to mean I have less—though this is often assumed. Organisations worry that in sharing power they lose power rather than seeing the possibility that in

sharing power it can be cumulative and combined with others', making it possible to achieve far more than the sum of the parts.

Power is held in structural, systemic, and institutionalised ways. It is something that happens between people so is inherently relational, dynamic and messy. To understand some of the complexity, consider these questions:

- Who sets the agenda and for what purpose?
- Who decides what matters most?
- Who is included and excluded?
- Whose voices are heard?

¹⁴ For a range of resources about power, see: <https://jethropeit.com/38-2/publications>

- Whose knowledge and beliefs count?
- Who decides and makes the rules?
- Who defines the meaning of engagement or participation?
- What kind of transparency is there?
- What dimensions of power are at play?

Crucially, power and how and when it is shared affects the nature and quality of decisions with research showing that power shared with others with different perspectives leads to better environmental outcomes.¹⁵

Combining power and inclusion through deliberative processes

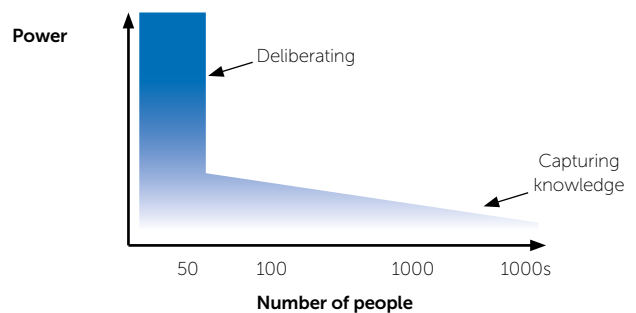
Equitable environmental outcomes can be achieved through skilled dialogue design and deliberative processes. This is quite different from engaging others in superficial ways to inform your own internal decision-making, whether within a consultancy or within a project.

Deliberation is defined as: when there is sufficient and credible information for dialogue, choice and decisions, and where there is space to weigh options, develop common understanding and appreciate respective roles and responsibilities (UN Brisbane Declaration 2005).¹⁶

Deliberative processes that involve a negotiation spanning a number of events are limited in the number of people who can be involved. Experienced and skilled professional designer/facilitators can facilitate deliberative negotiations of up to 60 people using an array of techniques—and with venues big enough.

Sharing power to shape outcomes with diverse voices changes how the people involved in the core deliberative process are identified, and the kinds of wider engagement needed to test emerging ideas and inform the deliberations (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Power to influence outcomes and numbers that can be involved



Identifying who deliberates

Typically, the highly flawed, 'influence and interest' matrix is used (see Figure 5) but it ends up as a reflection of the current power relations and justifies the status quo. In the UK and elsewhere, this is compounded by the fact that the environmental and related professions are the whitest professions after farming and so groups identified using this matrix will be dominated by white, educated and middle-class people (and male).¹⁷ Hardly diverse.

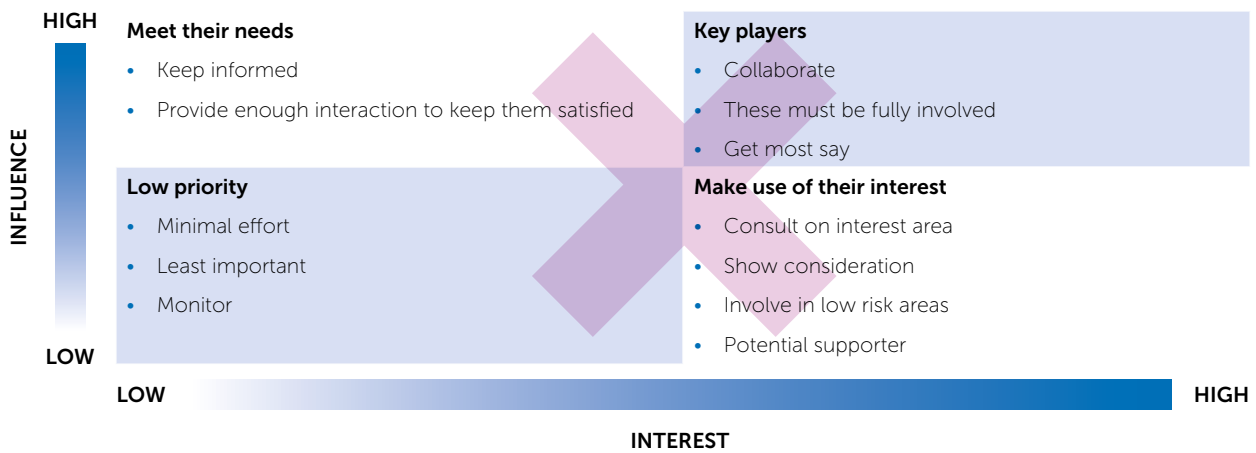
In the model, 'Key players' are already known or have the networks and information to quickly find out about something they want to influence, and they have the resources to do so. The matrix also encodes a way of treating people which is disrespectful and instrumentalist: people are commodities or resources to be managed, or used if they are useful or ignored if not.

¹⁵ Jager, N. et al. 2020 Pathways to Implementation: Evidence on How Participation in Environmental Governance Impacts on Environmental Outcomes. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*. Pp. 383-399.

¹⁶ https://cdn2.hubspot.net/hubfs/2619477/brisbane_declaration.pdf

¹⁷ <https://policyexchange.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/The-two-sides-of-diversity-2.pdf>

Figure 5: Influence and interest matrix



A better approach is to broaden out the deliberative group so that it is balanced and includes the different perspectives and knowledge needed for wise decisions. This is based on who knows what – not on any pre-existing power they may have. For example, if a project will affect the coast, bait-diggers have great knowledge; they are out every day, see what is going on, and see the natural changes around them. They would never be key players on the influence/interest matrix, but they are key knowledge holders about how the coast is used and natural changes. The same applies to those affected by flooding. Flood maps don't pick up where surface water pools due to minor topographical changes or how local communities are able to respond, but local people will certainly know.

“Combining inclusion and power through a deliberative process, integrates knowledge and results in greater equity and wiser outcomes.”

To identify people based on different knowledge, create a table with columns for each main type of knowledge and then rows for the nuance within each. This mitigates power considerations and results in a more balanced and inclusive set of people deliberating over options. A wider range of experts and specialists are included on the lists, too.

Conclusion

In summary, combining inclusion and power through a deliberative process, integrates knowledge and results in greater equity and wiser outcomes.

Neurodivergent Stakeholder Engagement – improving access to EIA for neurodivergent people

This article provides a primer on considerations needed to provide accessible and meaningful Impact Assessment engagement for autistic, ADHD, dyslexic and other neurodivergent people. The changes needed are small, but the effect on engagement has the potential to be huge. For autistic people, digital/virtual events may be more accessible and text more easily understood if it avoids non-literal language and vagueness. Focus groups and roundtables with multiple stakeholder groups can be overwhelming and hard for this group to meaningfully engage with. This article considers the benefits of extending Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) considerations to actively engage the neurodivergent community.

Use of terms

We are all neurodiverse. Some of us are neurodivergent, identifying, either through diagnosis or self-diagnosis, as autistic, ADHD, dyslexic, or others. In this article, the focus is mainly on autism, but it touches on the others.¹⁸

Neurodivergent people are born neurodivergent, although many are only being diagnosed later in life as understanding improves amongst medical professionals and individuals. This means that there are many adults who may have always struggled to fit in, been annoyed by the buzzing of fluorescent lights which no-one else can hear, been unable to focus on some things but fixate on others, or always got their numbers or letters jumbled, who are still not diagnosed or indeed have no desire to be. This is more about accepting and adapting

to people's individual needs than labelling, and advocates that different neurotypes are something to be embraced rather than overcome if society is serious about wanting social inclusion and equality.

Why think about neurodivergent-friendly engagement?

If the industry is serious about undertaking meaningful stakeholder engagement, opportunities for a wider range of people to engage need to be created. Neurodivergent people have a rich life experience which can differ significantly from 'the norm'. This is where innovation happens; this is how the industry ensures that ongoing projects genuinely minimise impacts to local communities and other stakeholder groups. Not to mention the requirements under various laws to not discriminate against disabled people, including those with hidden disabilities. Neurodivergence is, for many people, a hidden characteristic. You cannot tell by looking at someone.

Simple adjustments for better neurodivergent engagement

These apply to both technical consultees and the public, to diagnosed, self-identifying and undiagnosed and/or unaware. This list is best practice for all stakeholders and offers a way of allowing people to meaningfully engage in ways that work for them.

The list below is not definitive or exhaustive, and has been sourced from both academic literature, community

¹⁸ The use of the term 'neurodivergent' in this article aligns with Judy Singer's definition of neurodivergence as a political rather than scientific/medical term: www.neurodiversityhub.org/what-is-neurodiversity

“Neurodivergent people have a rich life experience which can differ significantly from ‘the norm’. This is where innovation happens; this is how the industry ensures that ongoing projects genuinely minimise impacts to local communities and other stakeholder groups.”

published material (mostly blogs) and lived-experience. Additional links are included in the footnotes, with a caveat that in order to understand why adaptations are needed, we need to start with the understanding that stakeholder diversity is a valuable thing for creating better EIA and design outcomes.¹⁹ It should help those undertaking stakeholder engagement exercises to start thinking about small adjustments which can make a big difference to neurodivergent people who may otherwise not be able to access engagement opportunities:

- Use plain language and avoid hyperbole, metaphor, or other non-literal language.
- Think about font use; black on white tends to be challenging for dyslexic people (and others). Minimise the use of bold and italics. Avoid too much dense text.
- For presentation slides, offer copies in advance. This allows people to engage in what you are saying and not worry about being able to keep up.

- Signpost your presentations; say how long it will take, how many slides there are. If your agenda says ‘coffee break at 10:30’, keep to time.
- Understand that, for some people, open forums can be overwhelming. Provide the opportunity for one-on-one feedback sessions. Likewise, many neurodivergent people (particularly autistics) find group sessions or focus group inaccessible or at least uncomfortable.
- Consider how the lighting, temperature and layout of your engagement spaces may feel to those with different sensory needs to your own. Bright, artificial lights can be torture; unclear layouts or exits can be overwhelming.
- Give people the option to leave meetings/presentations/workshops without warning. Normalise this by stating this as an option at the beginning of a session. A five-minute break to refocus could make the difference between someone providing valuable contributions and someone spending all their energy trying to sit still and concentrate.
- Offer hybrid meetings as standard. Some people need face-to-face meetings in order to engage, others need their own regular spaces to not feel distracted and withdrawn. Hybrid meetings can be great for this if the ‘chat’ function is used well.
- And finally, be kind. Don’t assume your preferred approach to communication or engagement will work for everyone. Don’t assume people are being rude for leaving early or appearing distant. And don’t worry about getting it wrong: your neurodivergent stakeholders will appreciate your efforts!

¹⁹ More information can be found here:

<https://www.rtpi.org.uk/blog/2021/april/why-planning-should-be-more-neurodiverse>

<https://www.texthelp.com/en-gb/resources/neurodiversity>

<https://www.accessibility.com/blog/digital-accessibility-neurodiversity> (for digital content considerations)

A note on the author:

Kathryn has a PhD in marine space theory and publicness from Newcastle University, is a Chartered Environmentalist, works as a Principal Consultant at HMC and is a Visiting Fellow at Newcastle University. She is autistic and advocates to make professional and public spaces more autism – and neurodivergent-friendly through minor adjustment from neurotypical norms.

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Public Participation in Impact Assessment and the potential role of Environmental Outcome Reports in ensuring meaningful public engagement

As the first reading of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill²⁰ was released, I read it with great anticipation and a strong element of hope, that an overdue opportunity to deliver long-lasting change to a fundamental part of the Environmental Impact Assessment process would be waiting within the pages. Accessible and effective public participation, and therefore trust and confidence, in the Impact Assessment process has been woefully lacking for far too long. For most impact assessments, public participation is, at best, a box-ticking exercise in the form of some sort of consultation exercise. This 'consultation' often comes late in the project lifecycle when most of the major decisions affecting local people and their communities have already been made, resulting in limited scope or opportunity to mitigate impacts and have a meaningful benefit to the outcomes of a proposed development. How many times have public consultations being treated like a glossy PR opportunity to 'sell' a development to the local community rather than facilitating meaningful discussion around the development and its environmental effects on their community? In my opinion, this is fundamentally wrong; local communities must live with these developments long after the construction teams and developers have left, so why shouldn't they be front and centre of the Impact Assessment process?

In a best-case scenario, it is Impact Assessment practitioners who act as the advocates, consciously or otherwise, for the public and local communities in the Impact Assessment process. They sit in options workshops and design meetings articulating to clients, engineers, designers and other stakeholders their environmental and social opinions. Very rarely is it the public themselves who input at these early stages. There is also the argument that Impact Assessment practitioners are paid for by developers, so this raises further questions around impartiality and their ability to robustly argue for better outcomes for the local communities, rather than what needs to be done in the best interests of their fee-paying client to secure the necessary consent. Even when Impact Assessment practitioners do advocate for community benefits, unless they pose a threat to gaining consent, there often isn't time or budget available to include them.

²⁰ UK Parliament (May 2022) Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill [accessed 14th November 2022] <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/58-03/0006/220006.pdf>

Looking at international Impact Assessment practice and, specifically, recent regulatory reforms in Canada at a Federal and Provincial level,²¹ the Environmental Assessment Act (2018) in British Columbia is trying to make real progress in this area. They have operationalised the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* by introducing procedural rights for participating Indigenous nations and an 'early engagement'²² phase culminating in an 'Early Readiness Decision'.²³

The early engagement phase provides the opportunity for all participants to better understand the project and establish a foundation for the rest of the environmental assessment. It prompts discussion among participants about the proposed project to identify engagement approaches, potential interests, issues, and concerns early in the process and help chart a path for resolution. This engagement must then continue throughout the assessment and decision-making process, and especially post-project approval. Involvement after approval is granted is key. This is when all the hard work done in the assessment and decision-making process should come to fruition, that the proposed mitigation measures are effective and accomplishing what was predicted and expected.

The Environmental Assessment Office of British Columbia hopes that this regulatory reform will give greater transparency and involvement of Indigenous communities and the public, through all phases of the assessment process, to achieve greater confidence and trust in the long term.²⁴ In my opinion, this is majorly lacking in current UK practice, especially post-consent community involvement, which would help develop a local sense of ownership and longer-term community buy-in.

"The proposed introduction of Environmental Outcome Reports presents a real opportunity to transform public participation and engagement throughout the whole lifecycle of a development. In return, this will create confidence and trust, support collaboration and, ultimately, improve sustainable outcomes for everyone."

While some may argue that the UK does not have the same historic cultural complexities as the Indigenous Nations in Canada, the fundamental principle remains. Given how intrinsically linked social inequality is to environmental inequality, surely now is the time to give local communities the chance to input into the whole project lifecycle so that potential benefits can be fully realised?

Part 5 of the current draft of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill, in relation to Environmental Outcome Reports and the proposed process to replace existing Environmental Impact Assessments, suggests that applicants need only to undertake 'adequate public engagement' (Part 5 Para 120 (4)). While

²¹ In UK terms, this could be considered National level (Federal) and then Regional level (Provincial).

²² British Columbia Environmental Assessment Office (December 2019) Early Engagement Policy [accessed 14th November 2022] https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/environment/natural-resource-stewardship/environmental-assessments/guidance-documents/2018-act/early_engagement_policy_version_1.pdf

²³ British Columbia Environmental Assessment Office (December 2019) Readiness Decision Policy [accessed 14th November 2022] https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/environment/natural-resource-stewardship/environmental-assessments/guidance-documents/2018-act/readiness_decision_policy_version_1.pdf

²⁴ British Columbia Environmental Assessment Office (Publication Date Unknown) Public Participation Guidance Material – Environmental Assessment Act 2018 [accessed 14th November 2022] <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/natural-resource-stewardship/environmental-assessments/guidance-documents/public-participation-guidance-material>

further secondary legislation will provide the detail, if 'adequate public engagement' is the starting point, I'm not holding out much hope. As the Bill evolves, I would advocate for a move towards 'meaningful public engagement'. In this context, there are well-established, internationally recognised principles from the International Association for Public Participation,²⁵ and guidance produced by several Multilateral Finance Institutions (MFIs).²⁶ 'Meaningful public engagement' should allow developers to learn from the communities effected, in an inclusive, open and fair dialogue. The engagement should be timely, iterative and inclusive (using multiple and appropriate methods). There should also be accountability and influence in the process,²⁷ with a requirement on developers to document discussions/ views and demonstrate how these have been resolved in the Impact Assessment consenting and, fundamentally, post-consent process.

The proposed introduction of Environmental Outcome Reports presents a real opportunity to transform public participation and engagement throughout the whole lifecycle of a development. In return, this will create confidence and trust, support collaboration and, ultimately, improve sustainable outcomes for everyone.

²⁵ International Association for Public Participation (Publication Date Unknown) IAP2 Pillars of P2 Brochure [accessed 14th November 2022] https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.iap2.org/resource/resmgr/communications/11x17_p2_pillars_brochure_20.pdf

²⁶ Kvam, R. (November 2019) Meaningful Stakeholder Engagement: A Joint Publication of the MFI Working Group on Environmental and Social Standards [accessed 14th November 2022] <http://dx.doi.org/10.18235/0001990>

²⁷ Stewart, J.M.P. & Sinclair, A.J. (June 2007) Meaningful public participation in environmental assessment: perspectives from Canadian participants, proponents, and government. *Journal of Environmental Assessment Policy and Management*. Vol. 9, No. 2 (June 2007), pp. 161-183. [accessed 14th November 2022] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/enviassepolimana.9.2.161>

The future of public participation and stakeholder engagement in Impact Assessment (IA)

Introduction

The future of public participation and stakeholder engagement in Impact Assessment (IA) will put people, social outcomes, and accessibility at the heart of informing scheme design and development. Future effective public participation in IA is dependent on stakeholder trust and confidence in processes and schemes, driven by the knowledge that the engagement programme or process is two-way, open, honest and transparent. In this context, 'scheme' could be anything from a plan, programme, policy or project initiative that requires an SEA or EIA.

People

In order to deliver effective participation and engagement as part of a scheme's IA requirements, it is vital that scheme promoters consider the people impacted. As expectations carry on rising among both regulators and stakeholders, best practice stakeholder engagement is increasingly early, continuous and central in scheme design and development. Best practice engagement typically refers to guidelines like those set out by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) as referred to in previous articles in this volume.

Promoters need to understand the importance of staying current with engagement channel options, which evolve at a rapid pace as higher expectations²⁸ and new technology continue to drive the bar higher. It is important to identify the most effective communication channels to suit the audiences promoters work with to

maximise the opportunity for participation. However, the success of participation and engagement is not measured by how many new technologies promoters made use of, but how many and the types of people promoters were able to successfully engage with. There is a risk that promoters can rely on the ease and convenience of existing digital communications channels and forget conventional methods such as press releases, letter drops and radio advertisements, as well as evolving digital channels such as TikTok. The depth of engagement should also be considered, as well as the range of stakeholders engaged with. Otherwise there is a risk that engagement is considered a 'tick-box' exercise, which fails to be meaningful and authentic.

Future techniques and methods of engaging with a different range of stakeholders are only as good as scheme promoters' understanding of the target audience. If the methods and techniques are not properly researched, promoted, resourced, and made accessible there will be insufficient and potentially skewed feedback to improve scheme design and delivery. By considering the audiences and demographics carefully, better engagement and scheme outcomes can be achieved.

Social outcomes

There is an increasing and welcome trend towards demonstrating the positive social outcomes and community benefits that a scheme can deliver in both its delivery and operation. This will continue to increase in the future as promoters realise that integrating social

²⁸ <https://www.iap2.org/page/pillars> accessed 28/10/2022

Image 1: Visual from the Halifax Railway Station statutory public consultation¹

Image source: Mott MacDonald 2021



value into scheme design helps smooth delivery by increasing stakeholder support. Within UK legislation initiatives such as the Equality Act 2010 and the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015, and tools such as Network Rail's Diversity Impact Assessment (DIA) can be considered driving forces behind the move toward better social outcomes.²⁹

Increasingly, scheme promoters and suppliers will recognise the positives of including social benefits within IA engagement and reporting.

Accessibility

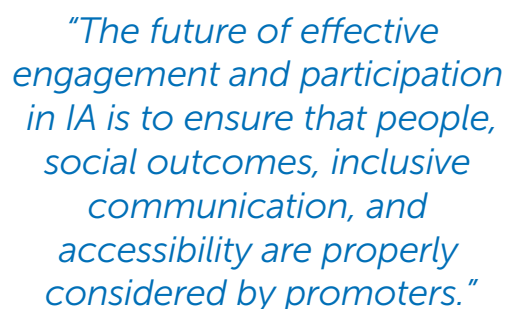
As stakeholders and scheme regulators come to expect higher standards from participation and engagement, there will be an increasing need to not only involve people and deliver better social outcomes, but also to make engagement and participation more accessible. This is in part driven by legislation, as all content on websites should adhere to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) to ensure that the information provided meets specified levels of accessibility.³⁰ However, successful future engagement and participation will go beyond this by considering accessibility at all levels, including language, tone, and imagery used in scheme public information materials. During stakeholder engagement in IA, promoters and project teams need to ensure accessibility best practice is followed, to deliver successful IA outcomes.

²⁹ Equality Act 2010: guidance – GOV.UK (www.gov.uk); Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015: the essentials [HTML] | GOV.WALES: Diversity Impact Assessments – Network Rail accessed 22/10/2022

³⁰ WCAG 2 Overview | Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) | W3C accessed 22/10/2022

Case study: Halifax Railway Station, Calderdale Council

Supporting Calderdale Council, Mott MacDonald worked closely with two stakeholder groups in Calderdale representing a variety of access and disability needs. Both groups raised concerns about the proposed development consultation materials not being inclusive. As a result, the consultation materials were improved to include images of a wider range of people accessing the station. The language was altered to make it clear that accessibility for wheelchair users, mobility scooter users and those that use walking aids were included. Feedback from both groups was positive, they had been listened to, and felt that the materials were more inclusive. This work ensured that people, social outcomes and accessibility were considered during the creation of public information materials and led to greater scheme support.



“The future of effective engagement and participation in IA is to ensure that people, social outcomes, inclusive communication, and accessibility are properly considered by promoters.”

Conclusion

The future of effective engagement and participation in IA is to ensure that people, social outcomes, inclusive communication, and accessibility are properly considered by promoters. Promoters and suppliers will need to keep an eye on evolving technologies and engagement methods to ensure that the best channels are used to engage with stakeholders. This approach will continue to help promoters build and maintain trust and confidence with stakeholders to grow scheme support and deliver better outcomes.

Summary

Tanya Burdett – Guest Editor

Public participation is fundamental to Impact Assessment at all levels. Doing it well and more than the bare minimum legislative requirements takes care, respect, an understanding of power dynamics and an attitude that seeks inclusivity of all voices in decision-making. The benefits of undertaking engagement that goes beyond the legislative minimum are well-established. The various articles in this edition of Outlook explore some of the characteristics of effective engagement: from being clear about the level of influence the public may have on a decision or Impact Assessment process, utilising tools like the IAP2 Spectrum, having clear communications, to challenging the status quo and thinking about inclusivity in a way that builds capacity of the community, of a range of interested parties, and of those who are interested in or affected by proposals.

The authors of the papers in this edition of Outlook provide insight into new and interesting approaches, specific techniques and other considerations. A recurring theme throughout the papers is to advocate for engagement and communications that is dynamic, flexible, adapts to the circumstances though holds to some firm principles of what makes for good practice engagement. The integrated nature of effective engagement and communications, central to IA practice, reinforces the need for EIA and other practitioners to continue to build skills and awareness of different approaches, reaching different audiences and advocating for community voice in EIA and related decision-making processes.

Indeed, the role of the IA and engagement practitioner is another emerging theme and one which, as the field of engagement deepens and specialises, should be kept under review. The risks of specialising to such an extent that EIA professionals lose the integral nature of engagement to their practice is ever present, and has been explored most recently by the likes of Barry & Legacy (2022)³¹ in relation to the intersection between planning and engagement practitioners and practice. Diana in particular invites us to question the role of power dynamics inherent in EIA practice, and how to build more inclusive approaches as we aim to involve, collaborate and deliberate, rather than simply inform or consult the public.

Part of the focus on engagement process in this collection of papers must be understood in the context of wider industry standards – the IAP2 spectrum is but one of three pillars, and others such as the IAP2 Core Values (which guide engagement practice) or Code of Ethics (which guide the engagement practitioner)³² may prove instrumental in embedding good engagement practice in IA practice. A simple assessment of the IAP2 Core Values against the Gunning Principles set out by Laurence shows a good synergy, though the IAP2 pillars may offer a little more in Core Values 4 ('public participation seeks out

31 Barry, J., & Legacy, C. (2022). *Between virtue and profession: Theorising the rise of professionalised public participation practitioners*. *Planning Theory*. doi:10.1177/14730952221107148

32 ©International Association for Public Participation www.iap2.org. Current versions of the SPECTRUM, Code of Ethics and Core Values are available in PDF format on the IAP2 website, <https://www.iap2.org/page/about> and click on the Resources link.

and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision') and Core Value 5 ('public participation seeks input from participants in designing how they participate'). Of course, the IAP2 constructs drawn on here and in the papers above are only one international set of standards that might be useful, and are a starting point for what we hope is an ongoing conversation about building improved engagement practice in EIA and IA more broadly.

I hope this collection of papers has prompted your thinking on what makes for good practice engagement in EIA. I would like to thank each of the contributors for sharing their perspectives, experiences and insights. Thank you to all the authors, reviewers and contributors for giving their time to make this edition a most thought-provoking and insightful one, with extensive references for those that want to follow up some of the wide-ranging concepts raised and explored.

Do you make effective use of ALL of IEMA's IA member resources?

IEMA's website contains a treasure trove of IA-related content, as well as information about IEMA's volunteer network groups, blogs, webinars and policies. But not everyone makes the most of this free member content, including:

- future events and webinars
- recordings of past webinars, with over 24 hours' worth of IA content
- IA guidance and advice: such as the recent guides on Land and Soils, GHGs in EIA, and Health in EIA
- the Proportionate EIA Strategy
- over 400 EIA articles and 200 case studies related to EIA, developed by Q Mark registrants in recent years
- individual and organisational recognition specific to EIA, through the EIA Register and EIA Quality Mark schemes respectively
- information on the Impact Assessment Steering Group Members
- copies of IEMA's latest policy papers and consultation responses to government proposals on Impact Assessment.

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IEMA's EIA Quality Mark – a scheme operated by the Institute allowing organisations (both developers and consultancies) that lead the co-ordination of statutory EIAs in the UK to make a commitment to excellence in their EIA activities and have this commitment independently reviewed. The EIA Quality Mark is a voluntary scheme, with organisations free to choose whether they are ready to operate to its seven EIA Commitments: EIA Management; EIA Team Capabilities; EIA Regulatory Compliance; EIA Context & Influence; EIA Content; EIA Presentation; and Improving EIA practice. In April 2021, IEMA celebrated the 10-year anniversary of the EIA Quality Mark.

Public participation, stakeholder engagement and Impact Assessment

This fifteenth edition of the Impact Assessment Outlook Journal provides a series of thought pieces on the consideration of what makes for effective engagement in Impact Assessment. In this edition, the Guest Editor (Tanya Burdett) has selected eight articles produced by IEMA professionals and EIA experts. The result is a valuable, yet quick, read across some of the different aspects of UK and international practice, exploring public participation, stakeholder engagement and Environmental Impact Assessment.

About the Guest Editor: Tanya Burdett,
BAppSc (Planning) (Dist.), MEnvSt (Hons), PhD Candidate
Director at Essential Planning Ltd



Tanya has over 28 years' experience in planning, Impact Assessment and engagement. She has been involved in hundreds of small to large-scale projects. From nationally significant infrastructure programmes such as high-speed rail in the UK requiring high-level appraisal of sustainability, to state-government-level engagement programmes such as the Victorian Infrastructure Strategy, and level crossing removal projects requiring project-level Environmental Impact Assessment, and many small development applications and strategic planning assignments throughout the UK and Asia-Pacific. Tanya is skilled in all levels of Impact Assessment (strategic to project), research and analysis, community engagement, training and capacity building. Since 2008, Tanya has delivered International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) training to 1,400+ participants from over 65 countries. This has meant working with organisations dealing with a range of Impact Assessment regimes, planning systems and working to democratic principles.

Tanya is an IEMA EIA Quality Mark Panel Member, and since 2017 Tanya has been co-chair of the Public Participation section of the International Association for Impact Assessment (IAIA). She regularly runs capacity building sessions based on a range of international frameworks including IAIA, IAP2 and IEMA guidelines and principles.



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