

Community Stakeholder Involvement

**David Collier
Greenstreet Berman**

CIRI-6349A
CR0117001

September 2002

Contents

1	Introduction	1
2	Purpose of Stakeholder Involvement	1
3	The Importance of Trust.....	2
3.1	Trust in the Process	2
3.2	Trust in the Organisation.....	2
4	Communicating about Risk	3
4.1	How Communities See Risk	3
4.2	Credibility	3
4.3	How Communities Link Issues	4
5	Planning a Programme	4
5.1	General	4
5.2	Key Stages	5
6	Selecting Stakeholders.....	6
6.1	Types of Stakeholders	6
6.2	Practical Implications.....	7
7	Involving the Community	8
8	Campaign and Community Groups.....	9
9	Level of Involvement	10
9.1	Range of Levels	10
9.2	Giving Information	11
9.3	Consultation	11
9.4	Participation	12
10	Some Tools & Techniques.....	13
10.1	Newsletters.....	13
10.2	Project Information Centres	13
10.3	Opinion Surveys.....	13
10.4	Focus Groups	14
10.5	Public Meetings.....	14
10.6	Surgeries / 'Open House'	14
10.7	Participative Workshops	14
10.8	BPEO Workshop.....	15
10.9	Strategic Stakeholder Dialogue	15
10.10	Community Liaison Groups.....	15
11	Information Issues	16
12	Benchmark Programmes	17
13	Reference	18

14 Recommended Reading.....	18
14.1 Risk Perception & Communication.....	18
14.2 Consultation & Stakeholder Involvement.....	18
14.3 19	
Internet resources.....	19

1 Introduction

The SAFEGROUNDS guidance identifies specific points in the management of contaminated land on nuclear and defence sites where stakeholder input is necessary or desirable [Hill et al 2002]. This paper provides additional information on good practice in stakeholder involvement in decisions relating to contaminated land and subsequently during project implementation. Its purpose is to help users design an effective stakeholder involvement programme, including remedial actions if relations with stakeholders run into difficulties. The structure is therefore generally organised to be consistent with the project planning process, with additional background information where necessary. Detailed practical advice on the selection and running of specific types of event is readily available from other sources and is not included here. A list of useful sources of information is given at the end of the paper.

The paper deals primarily with the involvement of stakeholders other than regulators, government departments and those from the site owner's/operator's own organisation. Its focus is the local community.

2 Purpose of Stakeholder Involvement

The intent of Principle 2 in the SAFEGROUNDS guidance on the management of contaminated land on nuclear and defence sites [Hill et al 2002] is to ensure effective external participation, whether it is required by organisational policy or regulatory frameworks, to meet stakeholder expectations, or to improve decision-making. The increasingly positive approach to stakeholder relations on contaminated land issues is partly motivated by the sense that good governance as understood by the community and major shareholders requires it. Certainly, the primary drivers behind stakeholder involvement are overwhelmingly positive. The aim is to make better decisions, to develop approaches that can be implemented with community support, to improve transparency and to build trust. Stakeholder involvement is also important to risk management. As the Environment Council points out, it can 'prevent, resolve or help manage problems caused by external opposition to projects'. Where something has already gone wrong, systematic involvement can re-establish effective communication and help resolve difficulties. Though not all conflicts can be prevented or resolved and there may still be disagreement on principles, it may still be possible to work together and mitigate the sources of particular dispute.

Adherence to Principle 2 does not mean that all stakeholders have to be involved in all decision-making steps for every contaminated land issue on every site. The presumption in case of doubt should be for inclusion, but the level of consultation and involvement should be proportionate to the technical and societal significance of the decision. Strategies need to be capable of commanding consensus support within the community, and therefore ought also to be proportionate to the local community's perception of the need for involvement.

3 The Importance of Trust

3.1 TRUST IN THE PROCESS

The validity of external participation depends crucially on the integrity of those running it and their responsiveness. Contributions should be objectively considered and there should be a genuine willingness to take a different course of action if new information or insights are provided. If involvement comes after the options have effectively been narrowed down to one, it will be seen as a closed process and, at best, there will be no ownership. The consultation will be seen as a sham and simply a means of legitimising a prior decision.

3.2 TRUST IN THE ORGANISATION

Community involvement programmes are unlikely to be effective unless a degree of trust can first be established. Relationships with stakeholders and the public need to be built up over time. It is not realistic to expect that the trust and credibility required for successful consultation will be established quickly, especially where the project is contentious and the debate polarised from the start.

Acceptable motives, realistic strategies and effective regulation are prerequisites for building trust, but perhaps the most important factor is openness. An open culture within the organisation is the ideal. Practical examples of openness in the context of a community involvement programme include: admitting mistakes, acknowledging uncertainty, and giving people the full picture.

Reliability is another important contributor to trust. That is, the confidence that the sponsoring organisation and the individuals working within it will do what they say they will do. Not only should the organisation be open and honest, but it should also be efficient and competent so that its promises mean something. Poor reliability can easily grow into a more general lack of trust.

Example

A major nuclear consultation ran into difficulties. *'Registration ought to be a simple matter and in this case the basic process functioned well enough. However a series of administrative problems created confusion and [pressure groups] in particular started to lose confidence in the [consultation] as a whole'*. The solution was to bring together pressure groups and project team members to identify the problems and their causes, and to work together to implement solutions. Progress was possible because of the teams' openness and desire to improve, and the pressure groups' constructive approach. Consensus is often possible on process, even where the parties seek different outcomes, if trust can be first established at a personal level.

4 Communicating about Risk

Although much is known about the differences between the way engineers and communities think about risk, communications between the two can still be fraught with difficulty and so the basics are summarised below.

4.1 HOW COMMUNITIES SEE RISK

Even allowing for the various biases that are at work in risk perception - such as the tendency to consider widely-reported events to be more likely than they really are - the general public's ability to rank frequency of death from hazards is often not unrealistic. Where ordinary people part company from 'scientific' risk assessment is that they factor in 'quality' of hazard e.g. dread, familiarity and catastrophic potential. Different forms of death and disease are not feared equally.

It is a mistake to confuse people's understanding of a risk with their acceptance of it. The level of acceptable risk is a matter of values and opinions. Any evaluation of options is therefore likely to have to explicitly incorporate underlying values and social factors such as fairness and the balance of benefit and risk. Steps that result in a fairer and more voluntary distribution of risk will be helpful.

A feeling that the things that can sensibly be done to reduce the risk have been done, and that there are effective monitoring and emergency response arrangements, is important to acceptability. Communities also tend to look for independent monitoring and open reporting of results, plus other indications that adverse findings will not be concealed, so that if things do not turn out as predicted, action will be taken. They also look for a design that allows for a change of plan if the unexpected happens, and the potential for effective countermeasures should there be a failure.

Motive is very important, and the corporate values of the sponsoring organisation will make a difference. It matters who stands to gain from a project, and whether they 'deserve' that benefit. For example, it is becoming increasingly obvious that the public will tolerate certain types of risks if there is sufficient medical benefit but not if the only benefit is a corporation's 'bottom line'.

Any stakeholder programme has to deal with these risk perception and acceptability factors in an open and straightforward way if participants are to see it as addressing their concerns, which must never be dismissed as 'unscientific'.

4.2 CREDIBILITY

The credibility of someone talking about risk depends only in part on his or her technical competence. It is also strongly influenced by how committed they appear to be to stakeholder involvement, whether they understand and are sympathetic to the concerns being expressed, and whether their manner is open, honest and direct.

Independence and objectivity are also important considerations. Information from 'biased' sources will tend to be distrusted. People place most weight on information that is clearly neutral and addresses all sides of the argument. For instance, independent

peer review of the important subjective judgements underpinning the analysis may need to be carried out to underpin a comparison of options for a controversial project.

4.3 HOW COMMUNITIES LINK ISSUES

The public rarely see decisions as independent of the wider context. They inevitably perceive decisions that form part of a wider programme, such as site restoration, as being linked and if they cannot see the wider picture they will be likely to feel either mistrust or frustration – probably both. An involvement process will therefore be successful only if the participants fully understand the context, e.g. how a decision on one element of a wider plan fits together with decisions on other elements and on the overall framework. Participants need to be aware if proposals may be overturned or modified at a later stage or if other bodies (eg regulators) might initiate their own separate consultation. Communities link issues and decisions that seem separate to industry and regulators. Also, people see little distinction between policy and its implementation.

Members of the public usually wish to make their views known on the overall merits of the project and of alternatives but are rarely in a position to make much contribution on the technical development of the proposal. Thus a programme that aims to involve members of the public by allowing them to comment only on technical detail will frustrate them. They frequently want to be heard on matters that concern them but that are ostensibly outside the formal scope of the consultation and may well also be outside the scope of the project team's decision making. Exclusion and abrupt rejection of comment as 'outside the scope of what we are here to discuss' is liable to provoke an angry reaction. Some flexibility is therefore required, and there needs to be a mechanism for passing on such comments and obtaining a response.

Many environmental debates actually represent conflicts over competing social values as well as disagreements over scientific and economic data. The public and wider stakeholder community provide a social peer review function. This is comparable with the technical peer review that is the usual consultation objective. But these represent different sorts of processes. They require different, perhaps parallel, approaches. Some of the difficulties in recent UK consultations are a result of attempting to stretch mechanisms and information provision designed for technical consultation to accommodate a different type of stakeholder input.

There is also the challenge of integrating the technical and social inputs. Unless the decision-making process is tailored to accommodate both types of input, and agreed before the process starts, the hard-won social input from the general public may simply be put to one side.

5 Planning a Programme

5.1 GENERAL

The key stages in planning and implementing a typical stakeholder involvement programme are outlined in Section 5.2 below. Each programme is however unique and needs to be tailored for its purpose and its audience. In general, the larger the scope and reach, the better defined and more formal the stages will be. In a smaller

consultation they may be implicit or merged together. Even then, it will usually not be adequate to rely on written consultation alone.

Early consultation is often the key to the success of an initiative, and to securing co-operation in it: omitting it may cause delay and expense later. The objective is usually to identify and involve the key players early, build trust and improve understanding of potential participants' priorities and needs, thereby helping design a more effective consultation programme and encouraging participation. A key aim is to ensure that there are no surprises for either key stakeholders or the sponsor once the project enters the public domain.

Example: Early Consultation on New Waste Strategy

- New management strategy being considered for a radioactive waste stream.
- Possible approach and options discussed with local community liaison group before detailed work started.
- LCLG identified potential problems and potential stakeholder issues that led to reconsideration.
- Potential for significant problems, and waste of time and effort averted.

It is important that the agenda for early consultation is not too circumscribed, so that others can have a part in developing it. It is helpful to let others who are interested know the likely timing of different forms of consultation as early as possible (and any later changes to it).

5.2

KEY STAGES

The key stages in planning and implementing a typical stakeholder involvement programme are:

1. Define the purpose – what is the scope and purpose; how does it fit in with wider decision making and other initiatives; which stakeholders should be involved and what are their particular needs.
2. Plan the programme – what mix of activities is required; how should the programme be promoted; what documentation needs to be prepared; who should be allocated to the programme project team; what resources and training do they need; are internal workshops required first; how will the programme be evaluated.
3. Review the plan – inform community of proposals; review the scope and design of the programme with some of those likely to be involved; test examples of any promotional and information material.
4. Promote the programme – launch the programme; make media announcements if required; inform internal and external stakeholders; encourage and facilitate involvement by individuals and groups in the community; start stakeholder registration database; set out details of access to information and any outreach events.

5. Provide information – disseminate and make available key documents; organise poster displays, site visits, presentations to community groups, as required; if deemed necessary, set up library for participants, web site with supporting information, telephone help lines.
6. Consult – consult interested stakeholders; provide various means to comment; acknowledge and record comments; consider interactive outreach activities such as public meetings and ‘surgeries’, and use of surveys or questionnaires to canvas opinions.
7. Participate – hold meetings with stakeholders; answer questions; provide background information; consider facilitated events such as meetings, workshops and focus groups to explore specific issues in more depth; consider joint problem solving and group decision making methodologies or deliberative methods such as citizens’ juries; discuss proposed events with potential participants.
8. Extend participation –if necessary, involve more community liaison groups; consider possibilities for joint working parties and ‘neutral’ data gathering or monitoring.
9. Compile input to decision - assess comments and outputs from participative events; seek further clarification or new analysis as necessary; document process.
10. Feedback – provide feedback to participants on comments received and how they were taken into account, decision made, next steps etc.; inform stakeholders not directly involved in this specific programme.
11. Evaluate the programme – seek the views of participants; incorporate the lessons in internal guidelines; feedback to stakeholders.

6 Selecting Stakeholders

6.1 TYPES OF STAKEHOLDERS

The focus of this paper is the local community, but other types of stakeholder also need to be involved if the external input to decision-making is not to be dominated by one perspective or set of interests. Stakeholders are much less likely to respond constructively in future if they feel unfairly excluded.

Internal or external stakeholders that have a reasonable degree of commonality of interest with the organisation in question are the most obvious category of stakeholder, and are sometimes referred to as ‘true stakeholders’. There are however other classes of stakeholder that are affected by the decisions an organisation takes or have a strong view on its conduct, even if their interests are very different.

Organisations require a ‘licence to operate’ from a wider range of stakeholders. This is obvious in the case of regulators such as the Health & Safety Executive, where authority has been delegated by society. The right of shareholders to regulate the direction of a business is also readily appreciated. In practice however, organisations find that their ‘licence to operate’ can also be compromised or even withdrawn because they have lost the consent of the local community in which they operate, or they have lost the confidence of politicians and financiers.

Campaign groups often see themselves as having a ‘license to operate’ or watchdog role, but they are also often significant as opinion formers able to influence other stakeholders. The media are sometimes considered to be stakeholders, but are more often considered separately with other opinion formers, on the basis that there is usually no strong commonality of interest. They may have considerable influence on other stakeholders and may also be seen in turn as an indicator of a broader, unobserved, public mood.

A community cannot be treated as a single entity. Relationships between the site and the community are complex and all the different types of stakeholder described above are contained within it. The people who live around the site and the community groups, and local authorities that speak for them, have a wide range of inter-relationships and perspectives. In reality, there is no such a thing as ‘the community view’ and this has to be born in mind in reading the sections that follow.

6.2 PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Stakeholders are constituencies, organised groups or individuals that have a direct or indirect interest in the decision. This may be, for example, because they are potentially affected, because they have a view on what the outcome ought to be, or perhaps because they are representative in some way of a wider constituency.

In practice, the stakeholders and stakeholder groups who should be considered include those whose support for the project will help it go ahead smoothly and those whose opposition will delay the project, obstruct it, or reduce its viability. The starting point is normally those who may be, or would think they may be, affected by the project, their representatives and the site local liaison group. Beyond that, programmes may look to include people and groups influential in the area, those with an interest in a particular outcome and also stakeholders that have been involved in the issue in the past.

The full range of stakeholders does not need to be involved on every project. The scale of involvement generally reflects the nature and extent of the perceived potential impact, and the project's importance as a precedent. The presumption in case of doubt should be for inclusion, but the level of consultation and involvement should be proportionate to the technical and societal significance of the decision. Strategies need to be capable of commanding consensus support within the community, and therefore should also be proportionate to the local community's perception of the need for involvement.

For example, where there is significant potential off-site impact or interest in a contaminated land management decision, the views of a wider range of external stakeholders should always be sought before a preferred option is selected and submitted for regulatory approval. The emphasis for smaller projects may be on information provision and consultation may be limited to the local community. There will also be contamination issues that have little or no significance for stakeholders and where quick action is a priority, for instance clean up of a small spillage. It may then be appropriate simply to include it in routine reports to the local community liaison group.

The application of BPEO-type processes is a major theme in the SAFEGROUNDS guidance [Hill et al 2002]. The degree to which external stakeholders are brought into the process and the balance between local, regional and national involvement again depends on the potential impact and significance of the project. One mechanism for involvement is an ‘options assessment panel’ that brings together internal and external

stakeholders to identify and screen options, reviews attributes and weightings and comes to conclusions about the most appropriate option. The BPEO-type study informs the eventual decision, but it is only one of the factors that determines the choice.

7 Involving the Community

People and organisations in the community need to be quite strongly motivated to participate in consultation or decision making. It takes a great deal of time and effort – often unpaid - and it can be an intimidating experience for non-technical members of the community. The successful involvement programmes are those that are ‘stakeholder friendly’, designed to improve the benefits people get from participation and lower the barriers to involvement (see table below). The relevance of the programme to them personally is explained, they feel that they have something useful to contribute, and they feel that their involvement has the potential to affect the course of the decision-making process in a meaningful way.

Consultation on safety, environment and the introduction of new technology has tended to be dominated by institutional stakeholders and pressure groups. There are good reasons for this. Such organisations are usually equipped to provide technical comment at a level the sponsors of the programme will find useful, and they understand the decision-making and regulatory process.

In contrast, members of the public usually wish to make their views known on the overall merits of a project or course of action but only rarely can they make much contribution to the technical debate unless local issues are involved. However sponsors are nowadays increasingly carrying out broad-based public consultation and making more effort to reach 'ordinary people' and factor their views into the decision. Lay members of the public are also capable of making reasoned and reasonable contributions and their involvement is often particularly important in contaminated land projects. Members of the public also increasingly feel that they have a right to information and to be consulted on a wide variety of issues. One consequence of the growing recognition of the benefits and importance of consulting the general public is the wide variety of approaches and facilitated workshop techniques that have been developed specially for this purpose. Only those with strong prior views tend to respond readily to opportunities for participation, so active measures generally need to be taken to recruit a more representative cross-section.

Where there is less experience of involvement, there may need to be an initial capacity-building stage to strengthen and provide resources to community institutions to allow them to participate fully. If people are being asked to participate in decision-making, time may need to be spent to bring them up to speed on the issues – ideally using briefings from a ‘neutral’ source. The pool of individuals who understand group decision-making processes and are equipped to participate in future will be enlarged with each consultation.

Long-term community liaison groups already exist for many nuclear sites and are an obvious channel for communication. They could play a key role in helping to scope the community involvement programme and documentation package and then drive the information agenda more actively than if there were no community focus. At defence sites where there is no such group, it may be necessary to set one up. This is best done well in advance, to give time to build up trust between it and site management, and between it and the wider community.

There is always the potential for conflict between the role of local elected representatives and other groups who may be perceived as speaking for the community. These issues need to be dealt with sensitively.

Issues in making involvement programmes stakeholder friendly	
Issue	Points to note
Competing demands	It takes time and commitment to participate properly, and there are many competing demands. Try to make participation as easy as possible.
Access	Carefully consider access to consultation documents and outreach events. Take into account the needs of the disabled.
Time	Aim to allow sufficient time within the programme for participants to prepare for events and to read and comment on documents.
Awareness	People have to be aware of the programme to participate. Think about informing and encouraging people through a co-ordinated promotion campaign.
Information	Try to present a range of information, taking account of the format and level of detail required by different participants.
Public speaking	The stress of speaking in a meeting deters many from participating. Surgeries and exhibitions are more flexible and less intimidating.
Access to the Internet	The Internet gives people access to a wide range of information and opinions from all sides of the argument. But not everybody has access, so a web site on its own is not enough.

8 Campaign and Community Groups

The participation of campaign groups is important to an effective and credible programme for both practical and democratic reasons:

- They can help develop the format of a stakeholder involvement programme on the basis of their experience, and provide feedback during it.
- Some pressure groups can provide critical scrutiny of documentation and make a technical contribution to participatory decision making.
- Consultation with pressure groups gives their supporters - who may include a significant proportion of the people taking an active interest in the project - an organised channel for expressing their views.
- It is fair to assume that the pressure groups represent their membership directly, but not the general public. They are, however, one channel by which evidence of public opinion might be communicated.
- Even their critics usually recognise that their involvement is an important safeguard.

Different groups have different approaches, make different judgements on the same information, and may have very different long-term agendas. However they probably have one thing in common - there are too many different calls on their scarce technical resources. They therefore need to be convinced that the issue is relevant and that they can have an impact. As far as possible, consultations should be co-ordinated to keep the demands on participating stakeholders to a reasonable level.

Where subject matter and/or the documentation is complex, where there is little authoritative third party analysis in the public domain, and where community involvement has a high priority there may be a case for providing limited financial or other support. Local campaign or community groups, in particular, may need practical support, a contribution to expenses, and help in securing access to independent sources of information and advice.

Pressure groups have the right to choose whether to participate in a community involvement programme. If they do choose to participate, it arguably implies acceptance of certain responsibilities. Namely, to behave with integrity and separate protest from participation so far as practicable, and to recognise the difficulties inherent in any programme and help avoid problems rather than exploit them unfairly.

9 Level of Involvement

9.1 RANGE OF LEVELS

At its simplest, stakeholder involvement may mean little more than keeping local people informed about activities on site, including safety and environmental issues and future plans. Consultation by contrast is a two-way process, whereby the organisation asks individuals and groups for their views and then takes them into account in decision making. Where more involvement is appropriate, members of the community may even participate directly in the analysis and decision making. Ultimate responsibility for the decision usually remains with the sponsoring organisation, but an objective of participation is often to reach a degree of consensus between the organisation, the community and other stakeholders on the way forward. Any one of these – information, consultation or participation – may be on-going, or it may be a ‘one-off’ activity focused on a specific issue.

The different parties often start with different understandings of the level of involvement proposed and with different perceptions of what is fair and appropriate. These differences may prove difficult to resolve. The key thing is therefore to set out the purpose and relevance of the programme openly and honestly and to ensure that everybody is absolutely clear from the outset what is proposed.

The stakeholder involvement process should never be an end in itself. Rather, it should be an integral part of decision-making and management processes. It only has meaning if all parties have this intent. The aim is to secure agreement for a stakeholder involvement programme that meets the aspirations of both the organisation and its stakeholders, but also one that takes account of the balance of cost and benefit and can be delivered in a timely and cost-effective manner

9.2

GIVING INFORMATION

A public information process is intended solely to provide information to stakeholders - usually the local community. Stakeholders may seek clarification, but they are not being invited to contribute to the decision-making process. A local information programme will almost always be required for a major project dealing with contaminated land. Typically an information programme covers things such as plans, progress, events, public safety and environmental performance. Programmes should offer people the option to obtain more information or become more closely involved. Tools available include newsletters, web sites, outreach events etc. Information on individual projects will often be part of a wider programme. Early, accurate and complete communication is a key element in building trust.

As a minimum, it is important that education and information provision form part of all participation programmes. The need for a greater level of participation must then be determined in each situation. It is not important to achieve the highest possible level of participation, just the level that is most appropriate. Techniques at the lower level of participation may also be used to support techniques at a higher level; for example, the provision of information would support methods of consultation.

Using Web Pages to disseminate information

Information provision takes many forms, including local newsletters and presentations to local community liaison groups. The Internet also offers new opportunities. The Australian Government's radioactive waste web site is at <http://www.isr.gov.au/resources/radwaste/index.html>. The UK ISOLUS site is at www.nucsubs.org.uk/. For an example of community level information provision see http://www.oztoxics.org/research/3000_hcbweb/index.html

9.3

CONSULTATION

Consultation programmes seek input from stakeholders to support and inform the decision-making process. The sponsor typically provides information to the local community and other stakeholders and makes it possible for them to submit comments on the proposals. Consultation is a regulatory requirement in some contexts. Consultations offer large numbers of people the opportunity to comment on a proposal or options. They allow for community peer review of proposals and may identify new technical issues that need addressing. They also help sponsors understand stakeholder views and concerns, so they can be taken into account in decision making and risk communication. However they are limited in that there is usually little scope for contributing to identifying solutions or for taking part in the decision-making process.

A local issue: UKAEA's remediation of the Harwell 'Catapult Pit'

- Focus was site neighbours
- Internal options panel
- Presentation to local community liaison group
- One to one discussions with key local stakeholders
- Local public meeting
- Application to EA goes on public register

9.4

PARTICIPATION

Participative decision making allows stakeholders to take an active role in the decision-making process rather than simply providing comment on proposals. They are involved in shared analysis and agenda setting, even though the responsibility for the final decision lies with others.

A commitment to participation implies recognition of the benefits of consensus, even if there is no specific prior commitment to it. When talking about consensus it is essential to be clear about what is meant. One meaning is 'unanimity' ie. each party must positively support the decision. More frequently however, it is used to describe a situation where a sufficient fraction of the participants positively support the decision. Others simply consent to it - even though they may not prefer it personally - because they consider it tolerable, or the best solution or agreement that can be achieved under the circumstances.

The more complex the issue and – in most cases – the more controversial it is, the more likely it is that a higher level of participation will be expected by stakeholders, required to develop understanding in the community, and necessary to get the quality of input being sought. Also, the more participative the process, the more rewarding it generally is for all parties. However there are limits to the contribution stakeholders can be asked to make - they are generally doing this in their own time - and participative processes cannot easily reach large numbers of people.

A BPEO Example: Decommissioning AWE's Pangbourne Pipeline

- Focus was local community and owners of land above pipeline
- Environmental options panel convened, including external stakeholders
- Panel participated throughout BPEO study
- Explanatory leaflets issued locally and through Internet
- Identified 'representative' stakeholders & canvassed views - prior assumptions about non-acceptability of some options proved incorrect
- BPEO only one input. Discussions with individual stakeholders continue
- BPEO available though EA's public register.
- Implementation strategy leaflets issued locally and through Internet.

10 Some Tools & Techniques

Inviting written or telephone comments is always an option, but there are a range of additional techniques available that can be used as part of a stakeholder involvement programme. Some examples are described below with a brief indication of their advantages and disadvantages in various contexts.

As noted above, the mix of information, consultation and one-off or extended participation techniques has to be designed according to the context. A simple clean-up of a pipeline spill may, for instance, only merit a mention in a newsletter and community liaison group meeting. However at the other extreme, major site remediation programmes or repository projects may require a much more sophisticated programme including participative techniques such as the workshop-based formats described here or more in-depth deliberative approaches. Further information is available - see 'recommended reading' in Section 14.

10.1 NEWSLETTERS

Written material used to convey information might involve a series of publications. Newsletters provide ongoing contact and information can be updated. They are a flexible form of publicity that can be designed to address the changing needs of the audience. They are useful to support liaison groups and have potential for feedback. Care should be taken in establishing the boundaries of distribution. The disadvantage is that not everyone will actually read a newsletter.

10.2 PROJECT INFORMATION CENTRES

Project 'information centres' have proved valuable on many projects where consultations have strong links to a particular community. Documents, reports, data, and information - including those from third parties - are made available for interested participants to use. An information centre may be housed on site, in a local library, or it may be an on-line 'virtual' library.

10.3 OPINION SURVEYS

Sending out a document to selected organisations and individuals for comment may help collect representative views, but favours those with more time to respond, may miss key groups, and can fail to get people really thinking through the issues and practicalities of proposals. Also, the balance of opinions expressed by those who self-select to respond to consultation initiatives or self-selecting surveys may bear no relation to the balance of opinions in society more widely. It is unwise to assume that opinions from a self-selected audience are representative of society at large.

Interviews and questionnaires may therefore be required. The options include a range of techniques for obtaining information and opinions. They may be self-administered, conducted face-to-face, by post or over the telephone. They can gather information from people who would not attend public meetings or become involved in other activities. Confidential surveys may result in more candid responses. A disadvantage

is that they can have a poor response rate. Also responses may not be representative and only reflect opinion at that time - opinions may change. Designing and administering a good survey/questionnaire can be costly and time consuming.

10.4 FOCUS GROUPS

Focus groups or forums are meetings of invited participants designed to gauge the response to proposed actions and gain a detailed understanding of people's perspectives, values and concerns. They provide a quick means of gauging what public reaction to a proposal is likely to be. Disadvantages are that selection of group members may exclude some sectors of the community, groups require facilitation and support to them is time consuming.

10.5 PUBLIC MEETINGS

Public meetings bring together interested and affected parties to present and exchange information and views on a proposal. If run well, they can provide a useful way of meeting other stakeholders. They demonstrate that the proponent is willing to meet with other interested parties. However, whilst appearing simple, they can be one of the most complex and unpredictable methods, and may result in no consultation, only information provision.

Large public meetings can be intimidating and may be hijacked by interest groups or vocal individuals. They tend to discourage meaningful dialogue between the public and government and encourage posturing 'for the record' and have received criticisms for too much mud-slinging. Smaller informal meetings and separate meetings with specific groups of stakeholders are therefore commonly included in programmes.

10.6 SURGERIES / 'OPEN HOUSE'

In these, interested parties are encouraged to visit a designated location, e.g. at a site or operational building, on an informal basis to find out about a proposal and provide feedback. This can be an effective way of informing the public and other interested parties. People can visit at a convenient time, view materials and ask questions at their leisure. But preparation for and staffing of the open house may require considerable time and money.

10.7 PARTICIPATIVE WORKSHOPS

Workshops with a limited number of participants can be used to provide background information, discuss issues in detail and solve problems. They can provide a more open exchange of ideas and facilitate mutual understanding. They are useful for dealing with complex, technical issues and allowing more in-depth consideration, and can be targeted at particular stakeholder groups. To be most effective, only a small number of individuals can participate. A disadvantage is that a full range of interests is not represented.

10.8 BPEO WORKSHOP

Participation is arguably less a function of the event format and more dependent on attitudes and the weight given to different views in the decision-making. However some group decision-making and deliberative techniques are in regular use as part of stakeholder involvement programmes. One example is the BPEO workshop.

A typical BPEO workshop is a facilitated event that brings a range of stakeholders together as an options assessment panel. Its aim is to increase understanding, and explore different perspectives on the options available and on the factors and weightings used to rank them. It informs and helps make the decision-making process more transparent, but the aim is not generally consensus.

10.9 STRATEGIC STAKEHOLDER DIALOGUE

Many activities could be described as dialogue. In this context, strategic stakeholder dialogue means an inclusive process that brings stakeholders together to address broader or strategically important decisions. Typically, corporate strategic stakeholder programmes run over 12 months or more to explore shared and different interests, and to build on common ground to reach an understanding or consensus. They are appropriate where a range of stakeholder groups, perhaps including industry and NGOs, need to be involved.

10.10 COMMUNITY LIAISON GROUPS

Long-term community liaison groups (CLGs) already exist for many large industrial sites and are an obvious channel for communication. They may be a regulatory requirement, eg for nuclear-licensed sites. They are a public demonstration of commitment to openness and respect for neighbours. They can give early warning of difficulties and can be used to test reaction to possible changes. CLGs are likely to have a key role in helping to scope project stakeholder involvement programmes, particularly the more complex or potentially controversial ones.

Project Liaison Groups

Where there is no standing local liaison group a Project Liaison Group may be set up as a channel of communication and focus for consultation. They are common in some industry sectors, including the construction industry. They are relevant also to contaminated land projects, but most of the experience to date in this sector has been in the US.

11

Information Issues

Poor information provision is a common cause of complaint in consultations and lack of usable information is often the main barrier to understanding and participation in a stakeholder programme. Access to the right information, at the right level of detail and at the right time is the key to effective stakeholder involvement.

Good communication requires the consultation sponsor to look at the information needs from the perspective of a range of potential participants - from the least informed, least educated member of the community to the technically competent professional organisation. Common sense suggests that it is not likely to be effective if the sponsor merely circulates scientific or legal documents drawn up for other purposes and other audiences. The information should be presented in digestible forms but without oversimplifying the facts and issues. Some local people may not be able to read technical English, in which case translation becomes an issue. No single document is likely to fulfil these requirements, and therefore a suite of documents may need to be provided.

Project sponsors generally provide only limited additional information on request. Typically, information is released to allow detailed comment on the data and analysis, but there is no obligation to provide information needed to conduct alternative analyses. This can be a major source of contention and stakeholders frequently complain that documents are being unnecessarily withheld. Sponsors therefore need to think through in advance which supporting documents they are able to release and discuss the options with stakeholders likely to be involved.

12

Benchmark Programmes

The following are offered as 'benchmark' stakeholder involvement programmes for typical applications. Every situation is different and the history, local situation and wider context will affect the appropriate scale and scope of involvement. A checklist of factors is included overleaf. The programmes do not list all activities required.

Benchmark programmes, illustrating a typical mix of scope, stakeholders, tools and techniques.

In all cases:

- Check for factors that might indicate additional measures are appropriate.
- Anticipate, support and comply with regulatory requirements for notification, provision of information & consultation.

A 'routine' operational local contamination or clean-up issue with no impact on the community and unlikely to cause concern.

- In many cases, it will be sufficient simply to notify the local community liaison group at the next routine meeting.

A contamination or clean-up issue with the potential to generate significant local interest and debate.

- Raise with local liaison group as soon as practicable and seek their advice on the appropriate level & scope of stakeholder input.
- Invite key local stakeholders (including local authorities) to provide input on issues to be taken into account and potential options.
- Keep local community and local stakeholders informed.
- Consider external input into option selection eg. BPEO panel.
- Consider event or other means of providing public with information.
- Invite local stakeholders to provide input on implementation issues.
- Make arrangements for on-going feed back of monitoring results.

A contamination or clean-up issue with strategic significance, likely to involve stakeholders at national level.

- Raise with local liaison group as soon as practicable and seek advice on the appropriate level & scope of stakeholder input.
- Plan and make resources available for a significant stakeholder programme, co-ordinated with other consultations as necessary.
- Develop stakeholder, communication and (if required) training programmes. Make backgrounds and project specific information available (typically through web site & links).
- Initiate 'front end' stakeholder programme to explore issues, perspectives, strategic implications & options with local and national level stakeholders. Pass on to 3rd parties as appropriate.
- Integrate external stakeholder input explicitly into option selection.
- Initiate stakeholder programme to review option selection and implementation issues.
- Make arrangements for on-going feed back of monitoring results.

13 Reference

Hill, M D, Penfold, J, Harris, M, Bromhead, J, Collier, D, Mallet, H and Smith, G M (2002). SAFEGROUNDS Good Practice Guidance for the Management of Contaminated Land on Nuclear and Defence Sites. See www.safegrounds.com.

14 Recommended Reading

This section contains recommended reading and references giving more information on different aspects of stakeholder involvement programmes and the tools and techniques used.

14.1 RISK PERCEPTION & COMMUNICATION

Communicating About Risks to Public Health: Pointers to Good Practice. UK Government Department of Health. Available at <http://www.doh.gov.uk/pointers.htm>

Effective Risk Communication: The Role & Responsibility of Government & NGOs. Plenum Press USA, 1989. ISBN 0-306-43075-4.

Risk Communication - A Handbook for Communicating Environmental, Safety & Health Risks. Lundgren & McMakin. Battelle Prtess USA, 1998. ISBN 1-57477-055-1.

Risk, Media & Stigma - Understanding Public Challenges to Modern Science & Technology. Flynn, Slovic & Kunreuther (ed.). Earthscan UK, 2001. ISBN 1-85383-700-8.

The Perception of Risk. Slovic (ed.). Earthscan UK, 2000. ISBN 1-95383-528-5.

14.2 CONSULTATION & STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

Improving Dialogue with Communities. Hance, Chess & Sandman. New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, 1988.

Participation works! 21 techniques of community participation for the 21st Century. New Economics Foundation, London 1999.

The Consensus Building Handbook. Suskind, McKearnan & Thomas-Larmer. Sage Publications USA 1999. ISBN 0-7619-0844-7.

14.3

INTERNET RESOURCES

- <http://www.epa.gov/stakeholders/> US government stakeholder resources
- <http://www.dest.gov.au/radwaste/> Australian Government Radwaste site
- <http://www.riskworld.com/> Web site with a wide range of risk of risk management & communication links