



Involving communities in consultation

Subject:

- A national process in the UK allowing groups to take part in a consultation on radioactive waste using a Discussion Guide and website.



Rationale:

- The process came from a need to involve a large number of people, in discussions on a complex topic, in a short space of time.

Objectives:

- To gather views, from a variety of public groups, on managing radioactive waste in the UK.

Outcomes:

- The results informed the Committee on Radioactive Waste Management (CoRWM) and their recommendations to government on what the UK should do with its radioactive waste.

Assessment:

- Integrated participation methods allow for a more robust consultation
- This process allows for deliberative self-managed discussions on a national scale, alleviating the need for people to travel to workshops and meetings in one location
- The Discussion Guide and online materials assist groups in understanding technically complex issues
- The Guide helps people to consider others' views, attempt to find group consensus and understand the dilemmas for decision-makers by exploring options through a series of questions

Main steps:

Stage 1: Invitations to participate in the discussions were sent to community groups across the UK

Stage 2: 'Discussion Guide Packs' were mailed to interested groups and individuals

Stage 3: Self-managed group discussions took place

Stage 4: Responses were received via the website and response forms

Stage 5: Responses were collated & grouped into common themes

Stage 6: Results were reported to CoRWM to inform their recommendations to Government

Participants:

- Environmental groups
- Educational groups / schools
- Community groups
- Industry groups

Role of facilitator:

- The discussion guides were designed to be used without an external facilitator. Instead, discussion groups were asked to nominate one individual from the group to ensure the discussions stayed on topic and one person to take responsibility for recording the discussion on the response form

Timings:

- The process started in October 2005 and finished in January 2006

Results:

- 568 reply forms received from groups across the UK, and at least 2826 individuals participated in a discussion using the guide
- Results were then displayed on a website which made for an open and transparent process
- Participants could read everyone's answers by navigating through each of the different groupings, and view a summary report of the responses received

Follow up:

- CoRWM's public engagement programme was independently evaluated

Practicalities:

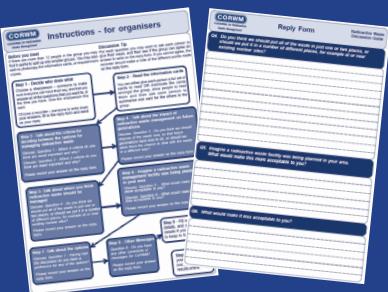
- Cost:** For preparing, printing and sending out the guides. Also a cost for receiving and processing the response forms. Minimal cost to groups if they used existing meetings to hold their discussions
- Venue:** organised by the groups who ran their own discussions
- How to prepare it:** Work with the sponsoring organisation to develop the materials, then print and post them to the groups who want to run their own discussions

Some tips:

Test the information and Discussion Guide on your target audience before you finalise it.

Remember this method is not asking for technical expertise, or for the general public to make the decision, but instead to find out what would be publicly acceptable and why.

The online process can be provided at an International scale, avoiding the need for International travel to attend meetings to consult on a particular issue.



References and resources:

Results of process: <http://corwm.dialoguebydesign.net>

A Handbook of Public & Stakeholder Engagement: <http://designer.dialoguebydesign.net>

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