

ENVIRONMENT AND CONSULTATION WITH THE PUBLIC

*World Road Association (PIARC)
PIARC Committee on Urban Areas (C10)*

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by

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ENVIRONMENT AND CONSULTATION WITH THE PUBLIC

Our urban areas are becoming more congested as people use their increasing mobility to move further and further from their places of work; and earlier retirement from work increases the demand for more leisure facilities and the mobility needed to use them. As a result of growing awareness about their environment, the public is increasingly demanding to be consulted and listened to before environmental projects in urban areas are implemented.

This article sets out one of the five themes being developed by the PIARC Committee on Urban Areas (C10) during the current cycle which culminates in the XXIst World Congress in Kuala Lumpur, 3-9 October 1999. It aims to identify the different ways in which the public can be consulted during the various stages of developing, promoting, planning, designing, constructing and maintaining an environmental project.

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Introduction

Urban areas are becoming more congested in a variety of different ways which would never have been imagined in previous centuries. Until industrialization began to re-shape the world, our admittedly smaller populations tended to be more scattered, being significantly based on agricultural and other associated lifestyles. Many people never ventured far from their rural homes throughout their lives, their personal mobility being limited by how far they could walk and return in the same day. However, industrialization and especially mass production have first concentrated populations around centres of production to form substantial urban areas; and then transformed the transportation needs of those urban areas to provide previously unheard-of mobility with the result that many workers have sought to use that mobility to move away from the centres of production to the perceived more attractive residential areas on the fringes of those urban areas. The result is urban sprawl accompanied by increasing traffic congestion in urban areas substantially caused by commuting together with an increasingly vociferous awareness by the public of the associated environmental impact of these trends. Thus the public is demanding more and more to be consulted and listened to when projects are proposed which may impact on 'their' environment, even on a global scale.

The public's increasing awareness about the environment has resulted in quite vociferous lobby groups and associated demands to be heard whenever major, and often relatively minor, projects are planned which will impact upon the environment. Consultation in itself cannot guarantee that all parties will agree on every issue but, if conducted sensitively and meaningfully, it should enable all the substantive issues to be aired and discussed in such a way that any disagreements can be minimized; and those in disagreement can be aware of the reasons for their view not being upheld.

Process

Topic number 4 dealt by C10 was «Environment and Consultation with the Public» and those members who have participated in the topic sub-group discussions at the various meetings of the Committee are indicated in table 1.

The Topic 4 Sub-Group prepared a detailed questionnaire (Appendix A) and distributed this to all members of C10 for completion as widely as possible. A total of 19 responses from 13 different countries in 4 continents across the world, listed next, were received.

Responses Received to Questionnaire:

Australia (2)	Japan (2)
Austria (2)	Netherlands
Belgium	Poland (2)
Canada	Spain
Finland (2)	Switzerland
France	United Kingdom (2)
Hungary	

In addition to the participating members of the Sub-Group, 3 correspondents contributed to the case studies

Case Study 3 –Sally S Patrenos, United States

Floridians Involved in Transportation

Case Study 4 –John Jenkins, United Kingdom

Traffic Management in Edinburgh City Centre

Case Study 5 – David Berry, Australia

Community Participation – Strategies and Guidelines

What is public consultation?

What do we mean by consultation?

Since consultation is a process rather than an end in itself, perhaps we should define what we understand by «consultation». We suggest that

Consultation with the public is a process which:

- may be used to increase the awareness of the general public, stakeholders, the decision-makers and the media;
- strives to ensure that the views of the public are fully taken into account in evaluating alternative proposals and in assessing their impact on the environment;
- facilitates, through the planning and implementation of a proposed change to the environment, an interactive and continuous discussion with the widest variety of interested parties;
- recognises that, to be effective, it needs reasonable resources and ensures that they are made available;

- considers and evaluates proposals sponsored by members of the public or other stakeholders;
- informs political decision-making.

Why consult?

Consultation may be undertaken for a wide variety of reasons, sometimes because it is legally required - especially for major environmental projects - but also because, although it may not be legally required, it is seen as desirable by the sponsors of a project. These reasons may include:

- informing those directly affected by a proposed project,
- informing those indirectly affected, e.g. through-travellers, visitors, traders, etc.,
- allaying unfounded fears,
- mitigating justified fears,
- provoking reactions (sometimes unpredictable) to a proposal, and perhaps seeking alternative proposals,
- evaluating the level of support or opposition to various different options,
- identifying the most acceptable option,
- increasing the degree of ownership of a proposal,
- winning over public support,
- using public opinion to counter a vociferous but minority protest group.

When to consult?

Consultation may be undertaken at various stages and/or frequencies in the life of a project, e.g. in generally increasing order of degree of commitment:

- no consultation at all,
- no consultation but contact details for project manager,
- one-off consultation event,
- one-off consultation event followed up by contact details, consultation events at different stages of a project,

- consultation at different stages of a project with contact details for other times,
- continuous consultation throughout all stages of a project, e.g. including:
 - at outline concept stage
 - at feasibility stage
 - at proposal stage
 - during detailed design
 - during various safety audits
 - during construction
 - during commissioning
 - during operational or maintenance.

How to consult?

There will usually be a tension between the sponsors of projects and those affected by it, whether directly or indirectly: consultation, if carried out meaningfully and in the right spirit, should release those tensions although it will rarely remove them. Consultation may have several phases:

- informing the public in order that they can understand the issues,
- debating, exchanging opinions, clarifying, considering alternatives,
- negotiating fine details of proposed project.

These may, especially for small projects, be combined but the ideal form of consultation is continuous and interactive.

Methods of consultation

In the last decade there has been a significant development of public environmental awareness brought about by environmental pressure groups, by global environmental incidents and by international environmental activities (e.g. Rio de Janeiro, Kyoto world environmental conferences, etc). This growing awareness on the part of the public has demanded more involvement in the planning stages of schemes having a major impact on the environment. Some good policies have been developed by authorities in setting out a framework for consulting with the public: indeed two of the case studies covered deal with the process of consultation rather than with specific cases.

Since certain methods of consultation are best suited to specific consultation strategy objectives it is best to identify the strategy objectives for consultation first, before then choosing the techniques. These strategy objectives can be broadly categorized under 4 general objectives which are, in increasing degree of consultation:

- I) provision of information but without encouraging any organized response,
- II) provision of information aimed at encouraging feedback from stakeholders,
- III) provision of information aimed at encouraging feedback prior to meetings with selected stakeholders,
- IV) provision of information aimed at encouraging feedback prior to open meetings.

Techniques appropriate to each strategy are listed in table 2 - Consultation Strategies and Techniques. The list is not intended to be exclusive but only a guide which can be adapted by users. In general any strategy can adapt quite successfully techniques from a lower category strategy, although the converse does not usually apply.

Case studies

Some case studies have been selected to illustrate some of the different techniques used by the different authorities in different countries for various scales of environmental projects: indeed two of the case studies are general guidelines or toolkits developed by their respective authorities for the specific purpose of helping their staff approach consultation in a constructive and formalised way. Clearly it is not possible to include full details of each case study (e.g. the Guidelines in Case Study 5 are set out in a 92 page glossy brochure) but contact details have been provided for any reader who wishes to receive more information on any one example.

The case studies appended are:

- a) Case Study 1 - The Northern Tangent at Basel / Switzerland. This describes the consultation processes during the planning of an urban motorway through Basel, including a crossing of the River Rhine) connecting three countries (France, Germany and Switzerland).
- b) Case Study 2 - Traffic Calming of Kaupintie Street, Helsinki. This describes the consultation processes used for a more localised scheme in the suburbs of Helsinki where inappropriate traffic was a problem aggravating the quality of life for residents.
- c) Case Study 3 - Floridians Involved in Transportation. This outlines a toolkit developed by the State of Florida in USA aimed at providing its staff with the necessary training and reference toolkit to ensure appropriate public involvement in decision-making.

- d) Case Study 4 - Traffic Management in Edinburgh City Centre. This sets out the consultation adopted for a traffic management scheme on Princes Street, a major shopping and tourist street in Edinburgh City centre.
- e) Case Study 5 - Community Participation, Strategies and Guidelines by VicRoads. This describes a general set of guidelines, prepared for the staff of the State of Victoria in Australia, which is an excellent reference document and checklist for community participation.
- f) Case Study 6 - Motorway Route Selection in Povazská Bystrica City, Slovakia. This describes the process of evaluating various options for a new motorway route past a small city, including alternatives suggested during the course of extensive public consultation.

<http://www.piarc.lcpc.fr/load/304/e/304-1-e.htm>

The techniques used in each of the case studies are tabulated in table 3.

Conclusions

The time when the professional technician decided what was necessary and planned it, designed it, constructed it and maintained it in virtual isolation from the community is now a thing of the past. The public is increasingly aware of their right to be involved in decision-making and is prepared to consider much more militant action in order to ensure their involvement. Consultation, therefore, is not nowadays an optional extra: it should be planned into any project affecting the environment as an essential part of value management.

Consultation with the public and other stakeholders at appropriate stages of any project affecting the environment will usually entail some cost and will take time if done properly, but this will be marginal compared with what can be gained in added value from a properly planned programme of consultation. When consultation is properly planned, it is likely that a project will be implemented more easily and quickly because of fewer unpredictable demands for change, and that consequently the out-turn costs are likely to be more predictable and the project managers better motivated in the knowledge of better support from stakeholders. At the very least all involved in a project can go forward in the knowledge of having an optimum consensus of support for the project.

In short consultation is an important process which must be planned as an integral part of any project affecting the environment. It is hoped that this article will encourage and facilitate that process.

Table 1 - Participation in Sub-Group working meetings

SUB - GROUPS WORKING MEETINGS					
Name	Country	Paris Jan.96	Oslo Jun.96	Lisbon Nov.96	Munich Jun.97
1 Anis BALAFREJ	Morocco	X			
2 Bystrik BEZAK	Slovakia		X		X
3 Marc ELLENBERG	France			X	X
4. Adrian GOLLAND	United Kingdom	X	♣	X (Ch)	X (Ch)
5 Kenneth KJEMTRUMP	Denmark	K	K	K	K
6 Ysela LLORT	United States	K	K	K	K
7 Susan MORTEL	United States	X	X	K	K
8 Kari OJALA	Finland		X	X	X
8 Hans RAMSEIER	Switzerland	K	K	X	X
10 Jesus RUBIO	Spain	K	K	X	♣ 5
11 Tor SMEBY	Norway	X	X (Ch)		X

SUB - GROUPS WORKING MEETINGS					
Name	Country	Bolton Nov.97	Davos Mar.98	Madrid Sep.98	Venice Jan.99
1 Anis BALAFREJ	Morocco			X	♣ 5
2 Bystrik BEZAK	Slovakia			X	
3 Marc ELLENBERG	France	X			
4. Adrian GOLLAND	United Kingdom	X (Ch)	X (Ch)	X (Ch)	X (Ch)
5 Kenneth KJEMTRUMP	Denmark	K	K	X	X
6 Ysela LLORT	United States	K	X	X	X
7 Susan MORTEL	United States	K	K	K	K
8 Kari OJALA	Finland	X	X	X	X
8 Hans RAMSEIER	Switzerland	X	X	X	X
10 Jesus RUBIO	Spain	♣ 5		♣ 5	♣ 5
11 Tor SMEBY	Norway		K)	K	K

(Ch)Chairman of Topic Sub-Group

X Attended Committee Meeting (on Sub-Group 4 once working).

♣ Attended Committee Meeting but on topic Sub-Group indicated

K Not yet or no longer a member of C10

Table 2 - Consultation Strategies and Techniques

Consultation	Strategy Objective 1 Information	Strategy Objective 2 Information+ reaction	Strategy Objective 3 Information+ reaction+ targeted participation	Strategy Objective 4 Information+ reaction +open participation
1 Bulletins	T	T		
2 Brochures	T	T		
3 Pamphlets	T	T		
4 Mailshots	T	T		
5 Public Display	T	T		
6 Feedback questionnaire	T			
7 Use of Media	T	T		
8 Open Days		T		
9 Information Hot Line		T		
10 Discussion Paper		T		
11 Shop front advisory service		T		
12 Complaints Centre		T	T	
13 Public calls for submissions		T	T	
14 Meeting key individuals		T	T	
15 Public meetings		T	T	T
16 Public attitude survey		T	T	T
17 Presentation to organised groups			T	
18 Local community groups			T	
19 Steering Committee			T	T
20 Workshops			T	T
21 Consultative Committee				T
22 Liaison Committee				T
23 Monitoring Committee				T
24 Conference				T
25 Seminar				T
26 Search Conference				T
27 Site walk/ inspection				T
28 Value management workshop				T
29 Referendum				T
30 Public Inquiry				T
31 Appeal to Courts				T
32 Evaluation	T	T	T	T

Table 3 - Consultation Techniques Used in Case Studies

Consultation	Case Study 1 Bale	Case Study 2 Helsinki	Case Study 3 Florida	Case Study 4 Edimbourg	Case Study 5 Victoria	Case Study 6 Slovakia
1 Bulletins	T		T		T	
2 Brochures	T		T	T	T	
3 Pamphlets	T		T	T	T	T
4 Mailshots	T		T			
5 Public Display	T	T		T	T	
6 Feedback questionnaire	T	T				T
7 Use of Media	T	T	T	T	T	
8 Open Days	T				T	
9 Information Hot Line	T	T			T	
10 Discussion Paper					T	
11 Shop front advisory service	T				T	
12 Complaints Centre	T					
13 Public calls for submissions					T	
14 Meeting key individuals	T	T			T	
15 Public meetings	T	T	T	T	T	T
16 Public attitude survey				T		
17 Presentation to organised groups	T		T	T	T	
18 Local community groups		T	T	T	T	
19 Steering Committee			T		T	
20 Workshops			T	T	T	
21 Consultative Committee			T		T	
22 Liaison Committee			T	T	T	
23 Monitoring Committee			T		T	
24 Conference					T	
25 Seminar					T	
26 Search Conference					T	
27 Site walk/ inspection	T				T	
28 Value management workshop			T		T	
29 Referendum	T					
30 Public Inquiry	T			T		T
31 Appeal to Courts	T					
32 Evaluation						