

## Summary

A well planned and well executed participation and consultation strategy will lead to better proposals and greater support for their implementation.

The strategy should be objective-led and should clearly fit with the stages of the planning exercise with explicit links between the outcomes of consultation exercises and planning decisions.

Planners should be pragmatic, taking account of previous work done and the range and strength of opinion in the strategy. Pragmatism should also extend to designing the strategy to fit the circumstances of the planning exercise and the constraints upon it.

The strategy should be targeted to ensure that the views gathered are representative and that people in typically "hard to reach" groups play a full part.

The strategy should have the following attributes:

- It should be open so that those taking part understand the process and can see how their views are being taken into account;
- It should start as early as possible in the planning exercise and continue throughout to maximise ownership;
- It should involve stakeholders both in the identification of problems and the development of solutions;
- It should provide feedback to contributors wherever possible;

A range of approaches to participation and consultation are reviewed and their applicability discussed.

The Scottish Executive requires as wide a range of participation and consultation as practical and appropriate to be undertaken, and documented, for any proposal for which it provides funding support or approval.

## 13. PARTICIPATION AND CONSULTATION

### 13.1 Introduction

13.1.1 A successful participation and consultation process will contribute to a scheme or strategy being more likely to achieve its objectives and so will promote better value for money. For plans and programmes which also require SEA, consultation is a statutory requirement under the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes (Scotland) Regulations 2004,

13.1.2 Involving and engaging people can have a range of benefits including:

- building confidence in the study or process;
- providing a better understanding of the problems, issues and opportunities;
- helping to generate more innovative and appropriate solutions;
- raising travel awareness and influencing travel behaviour;
- making people feel part of the decision-making process; and
- achieving widespread support for proposals.

13.1.3 Participation and consultation is not an end in itself. It is a continuous process that forms an integral part of any study, running in parallel with the development of transport proposals.

13.1.4 To maximise the benefit from participation and consultation, there needs to be effective communication between those responsible for participation and consultation and those responsible for proposal development and technical appraisal. Both processes will input into the decision making process and the linkages and feedback between them need to be clearly articulated. They should be interdependent.

13.1.5 There is no standard approach to participation and consultation that is applicable in all instances. To be effective the process needs to be tailored to a wide range of local and strategic needs, the stakeholders that need to be involved and the types of proposal being considered.

13.1.6 To summarise there are a number of different attributes that can help increase participation (*A Good Practice Guide for the Development of Local Transport Plans*, DETR, 2000):

- *early involvement* – so that groups or individuals can influence development of the transport proposals;
- *interactive* – a genuine dialogue involving listening and learning;
- *inclusive* – involving all local interest groups and key sections of the population;
- *continuous* – participation is not a one-off exercise but an ongoing process of involvement;

- *open* – decisions should be transparent, not taken behind closed doors; and
- *effective feedback to participants* – people need to be assured that their input is being used to influence the plan and that they are part of the decision-making process.

13.1.7 In developing a process for participation and consultation four key questions need to be addressed:

- What are the objectives for the process?
- When to involve people and on what?
- Who to involve?
- How to involve?

13.1.8 The answers to these questions will certainly need to reflect the size of the undertaking as a whole, as represented by the geographic area under consideration and the potential effects of any intervention likely to be recommended. Planners should form a picture of the likely budget which would be appropriate for participation and consultation activities as an aid to answering the last two of the questions given above. Further guidance on each question is provided in the remainder of this Chapter.

## **13.2 What are the Objectives for the Process?**

13.2.1 Prior to design of the participation and consultation process it is essential to clarify:

- the objectives of the process;
- the necessary inputs; and
- the desired outputs.

13.2.2 There needs to be a clear understanding of what the participation and consultation process can deliver, and at what points in the process/study, and in what form, input from the technical appraisal to the participation and consultation will be required and vice versa.

13.2.3 All parties involved need to understand the reasons for the process and be committed to it as an integral part of the proposal development process.

13.2.4 The stated objectives and outputs for the participation and consultation process provide guidance and direction for the form and shape of the process, as well as acting as a reference point from which to assess progress. This last point is important because the relative effectiveness of participation and consultation activities will need to be established both as an element of evaluation (see Chapter 15) and to facilitate learning of best practice on the part of the planning organisation.

13.2.5 *Guidance on Enhancing Participation in Local Government* (DETR, 1998) provides a useful section on setting objectives.

13.2.6 It is suggested that there are three essential elements of participation and consultation, and these may form the basis for the overarching objectives of the process. These are:

- informing;
- listening and learning; and
- exchanging: defining issues, debating problems and solutions.

13.2.7 More specific objectives could be for instance:

- ensure that all stakeholders are aware of the study, its purpose and progress;
- ensure that all stakeholders have the opportunity to put their views to the team undertaking the study; and
- ensure that the consultation and participation process is as inclusive as possible.

13.2.8 In addition there are a number of considerations that will be important in developing a process:

- *The nature and degree of participation and consultation that has already been undertaken.* Consultation fatigue can be an issue and may reduce the effectiveness of the exercise. People often get frustrated if they feel they have already given their views on an issue but have seen no changes as a result. An audit of previous exercises – transport and non-transport related - prior to, or in the early stages of, study development can ensure minimal replication and duplication and help to maximise response.
- *Lessons learnt from previous consultation exercises.* It is likely that the most contentious issues will have emerged previously. Knowledge of these can ensure they are paid due attention. An assessment of the process used in any previous participation and consultation exercise will also be valuable. This can provide guidance as to the most appropriate process to employ now.
- *Consultation in other areas/levels of policy.* It is important to liaise with those in other relevant areas/departments/groups where consultation may have been undertaken or is planned to be undertaken. As well as reducing the risk of consultation fatigue and ensuring that people are being involved in a coherent and co-ordinated manner, there may be the opportunity to cross-link with other consultation exercises.

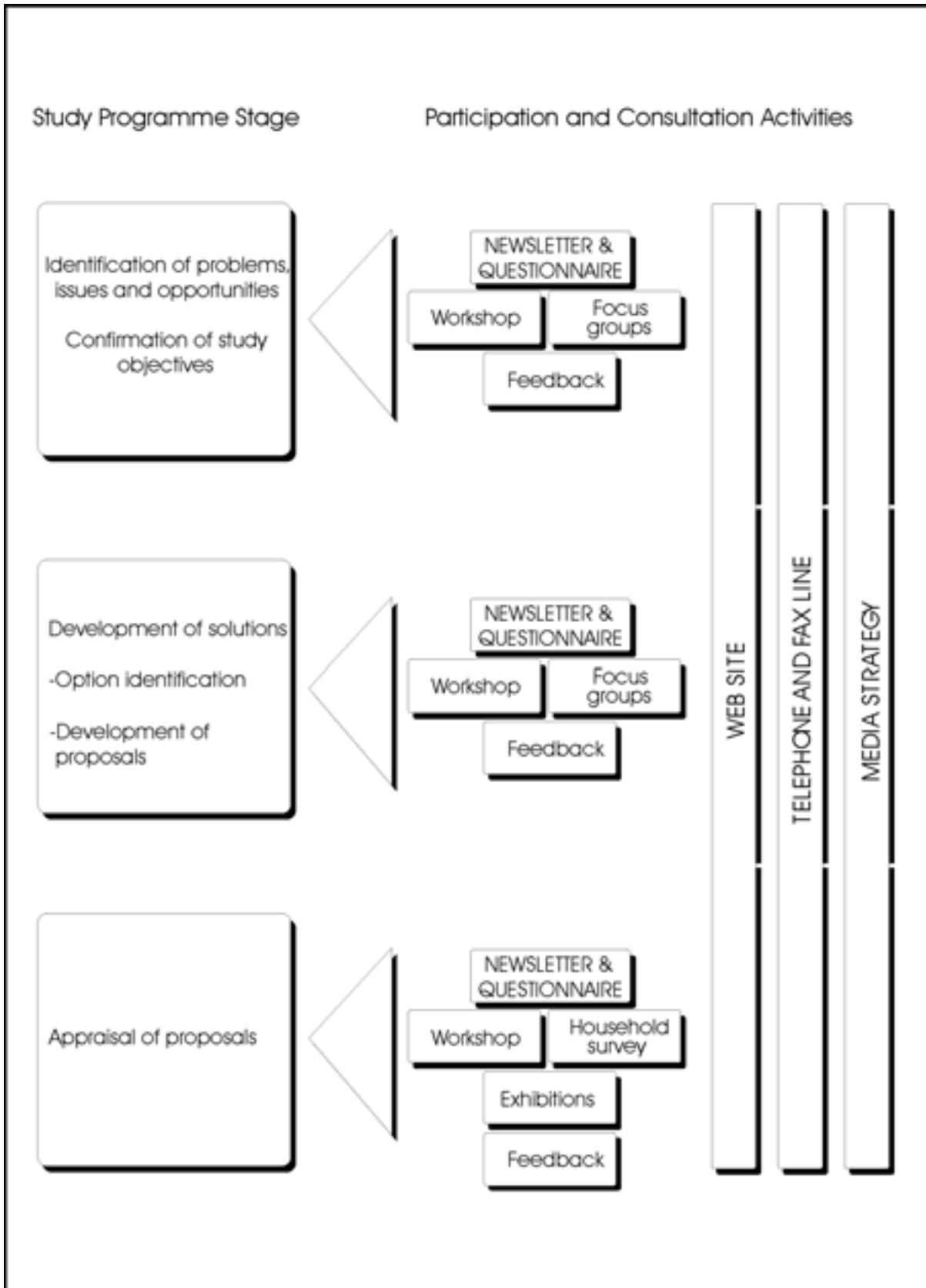
### **13.3 When to Involve People and on What?**

13.3.1 In developing the participation and consultation process, consideration needs to be given to when to involve people. This will be dictated by the relevant statutory requirements, objectives of the study, the overall study timetable, the inputs required and the process itself.

13.3.2 The key principle is for the process to be continuous. It is not a one-off exercise, but an on-going process of involvement.

- 13.3.3 It is important to remember that participation and consultation needs to achieve a genuine dialogue. It should be interactive with outcomes and results fed back to participants.
- 13.3.4 It can help to conceptualise a typical participation and consultation process as shown in Figure 13.1.
- 13.3.5 Involvement should start as early as possible in the process. This can include a contribution to:
- assessing the terms of reference of the study;
  - scoping the problems, issues and opportunities;
  - developing a 'vision'; and
  - finalising the overall study objectives.
- 13.3.6 Reaching a broad agreement on the objectives of the study, particularly amongst the wider public, is of value at this stage. It will provide a focus for the continued development of the study and will prove vital if, at a later date, people object to specific proposals. If proposals can be demonstrated to meet the agreed objectives, it can be asserted that they are in keeping with the view of the wider public and that there is evidence to support this.
- 13.3.7 The process should continue throughout the study, providing an input to all stages. This can include feeding into:
- the identification of options for consideration; and
  - the development of packages of options for appraisal.
- 13.3.8 By the positive step of including the wider public, the participation and consultation process can demonstrate momentum in the overall process. Consensus can also emerge over the relative priorities for implementation.
- 13.3.9 In the final stages of the study, participation and consultation can contribute to:
- appraising the proposed schemes or strategies;
  - finalising solutions to take forward/recommend for implementation; and
  - recommending the next stages in the process.
- 13.3.10 Some elements of the participation and consultation process will be discrete, such as focus groups, workshops and household surveys. These will take place at particular points in the study. Other elements will be continuous, such as a web site and media strategy, and these are likely to be in operation for the duration of the study.

**Figure 13.1: Relationship Between Participation and Consultation Activities and the Wider Planning Process**



### 13.4 Who to Involve?

- 13.4.1 A wide spectrum of people and groups will need to be considered when developing the participation and consultation process. This will include those directly affected and those with a strategic interest as well as those who will implement the proposal.
- 13.4.2 The precise combination of people to be involved should be determined by the objectives of the participation and consultation process and those of the study and, to an extent, the problems and opportunities identified. It may be appropriate, for instance, to target specific groups or geographical areas.
- 13.4.3 It is helpful to stratify the 'audience' according to type. Some examples are offered in Table 13.1.

**Table 13.1: List of Organisations for Possible Involvement in Participation and Consultation**

<b>User/Audience</b>	<b>Representative Bodies/Audience</b>
<b>Government and its Agencies</b>	<p>Scottish Executive and local authorities.</p> <p>Scottish Enterprise and the network of local enterprise companies.</p> <p>Statutory bodies e.g. Strategic Rail Authority, Scottish Environment Protection Agency, Historic Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage.</p> <p>Advisory non-departmental public bodies e.g. Mobility and Access Committee for Scotland (MACS).</p>
<b>Elected Representatives</b>	MSPs, MPs, MEPs, councillors.
<b>Service Providers</b>	e.g. bus operators, train operating companies, Network Rail.
<b>Businesses &amp; Business Representatives</b>	e.g. Chambers of Commerce, CBI.
<b>Community &amp; Interest Groups</b>	e.g. Regional transport partnerships, Civic Forum, Transform Scotland, transport activist groups/round tables, national and local disability groups.
<b>Freight Operators</b>	e.g. Freight Transport Association, Road Haulage Association.
<b>Wider Public</b>	<p>Users.</p> <p>Affected residents.</p>
<b>The Media</b>	Local and national: television, radio, newspaper, internet.

- 13.4.4 Members of the wider public are more likely to be concerned with issues that directly affect them, their immediate environments and lifestyles. Some may also be well informed on the more strategic issues and could contribute a useful

perspective on these. It is important not to underestimate the level of detailed knowledge people may have.

- 13.4.5 Attention will need to be devoted to ensuring widespread participation and involving the 'silent majority'. Research suggests that younger people (those aged 16-34) tend to feel excluded from typical participation exercises. They do, however, have views which differ from most groups which are already more involved. People with low incomes and representatives from small and medium sized enterprises similarly tend to be left out of the process.
- 13.4.6 At more 'representative' levels, politicians, business groups, service providers and a range of interest groups will have more strategic perspectives. It is important that they are kept informed of the views and opinions of the wider public throughout the process.
- 13.4.7 Previous consultation exercises may well provide a comprehensive list of organisations which it may be appropriate to invite to participate. An alternative is to advertise for groups to come forward. Planners will need to form a view as to the best way of balancing the desire not to exclude any interested group and the need to maintain manageable numbers.
- 13.4.8 Involvement, and more importantly management, of the Media is crucial. Interest in some projects will be great, and the amount of media coverage could be considerable. The aim should be to use this interest wherever possible and ensure maximum positive media coverage. Cultivation of media links and maintenance of existing links should be a priority.
- 13.4.9 For the wider public and stakeholders alike it is important to ensure that the process is inclusive, involving all local interest groups and sections of the population. This includes, but should not be limited to:
- people whose first language is not English;
  - people with mobility impairments;
  - people who are partially sighted or blind;
  - people who are deaf or have a hearing impairment;
  - people with learning difficulties;
  - children and young adults;
  - people on low incomes;
  - people without access to a car; and
  - people who work long or unsociable hours.

## 13.5 How to Involve?

### Techniques

- 13.5.1 A wide range of techniques for participation and consultation have been developed. These vary in the degree of active participation and the extent to which separate groups are targeted. The choice of method should reflect the stage in the process, the target audience and the aim of the involvement and it is likely that a combination of methods will be required to satisfy the objectives of the process.
- 13.5.2 Details on the different types of participation and consultation method are available in the *Guidance on Enhancing Public Participation in Local Government* (DETR, 1998). Further suggestions can be found in *Guidelines on Developing Urban Transport Strategies*, Institute of Highways and Transportation, 1996 (Chapter 5). A more innovative and informal series of suggestions is given in *Participation Works! – 21 Techniques of Community Participation for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, New Economics Foundation, 1998 (downloadable from <http://www.neweconomics.org>).
- 13.5.3 Different groups will have different levels of knowledge about issues, and it may be the case that some already have a well-established agenda in terms of what they perceive the problems and solutions are. This is not a reason to be afraid of engaging certain groups or people. Strong views should be anticipated and the participation and consultation process planned accordingly, to incorporate the opinions, if necessary to challenge entrenched views, and not to let them dominate proceedings.
- 13.5.4 It is important that the purpose of any element in the participation and consultation process is clear – both for those designing and implementing and those on the receiving end. For example, what is the message that a newsletter is trying to get across?
- 13.5.5 Each element in the process should try not to cover too much ground. For example, a focus group should concentrate either on giving participants the opportunity to talk freely about issues and ask questions of the technical study team, or on involving participants in addressing specific issues relating to option development through an independent facilitator. In this way the role of all participants, the purpose and desired outputs of the session are clear.
- 13.5.6 Summarised below are some important points to note for the most common methods.

#### *Focus Groups*

- 13.5.7 Focus groups with members of the public provide a useful starting point. They can be used to engage people in the debate as to what the problems, issues and opportunities are. They are also an opportunity to identify and begin to address the key conflicts that exist.

- 13.5.8 It is generally of more use if people are specifically recruited to attend focus groups. In this way the composition of the group can be controlled, allowing a wide spectrum of people in the community to be involved.
- 13.5.9 In some instances it may be desirable to have a focus group for a particular section of the community, such as young people or retired people. This can allow the exploration of issues of particular relevance to them.
- 13.5.10 The focus group facilitator should be impartial and objective. Minimal knowledge of the study can therefore be an advantage.
- 13.5.11 A key role of the facilitator is to ensure that contributions are equally spread across all participants.

#### *Workshops*

- 13.5.12 Workshops differ from focus groups in being a more structured environment for the discussion of issues. They can be tightly facilitated and designed to address specific questions and issues. In general, workshops are more suitable for people who are informed at a strategic level, for example members of a Reference Group.
- 13.5.13 It may be appropriate, for instance if holding a workshop to develop a high-level strategy, that the facilitator is not closely involved with the study. However, if the purpose is to respond to queries, knowledge of the study will clearly be necessary.
- 13.5.14 Provision of information to participants prior to holding the workshop ('feed forward') can help to ensure everyone has a certain level of comprehension of particular issues. This can enable more productive sessions, by allowing canvassing of members in advance and providing an opportunity for written submissions by organisations unable to provide a representative on the day.

#### *Citizens' Juries*

- 13.5.15 A citizens' jury is made up of people selected from the community, made as representative as possible in terms of gender, ethnicity, employment status and other relevant factors. A typical number of participants is 16.
- 13.5.16 The jury "sits" over a period of days, during which time it hears evidence presented by witnesses, being proponents of the various viewpoints in question. The process will tend to be facilitated by professionals to ensure smooth running. The jury members may be directly aided by a facilitator who helps in the sifting of evidence or pursuit of further information.
- 13.5.17 Citizens' juries are found to work best in settings where there is a genuine openness on the part of the sponsoring body to accept their findings and where there is a defined choice between identified options. In a long-term study, it may be appropriate to convene such a jury more than once to consider a range of issues starting with the study's priorities and concluding with final recommendations.

- 13.5.18 The benefit of a well-run citizens' jury is that it will arrive at conclusions which can be claimed to be both representative of the community's view and properly considered, thus overcoming the concern that the wider consultation is conducted, the greater the risk of obtaining mere "sound-bites" of opinion.

*Household/On-street Interviews*

- 13.5.19 Interviews can be used to establish broad levels of support for a particular proposal, and therefore give the confidence to support or refute a plan. It can show the degree to which the views collected by the more qualitative methods represent the views of a broad spectrum of the public. It can also be employed to benchmark attitudes and opinion before the results of a study are launched and its recommendations implemented.

- 13.5.20 Household interviews can be usefully employed in the problem identification stage and particularly in the final strategy assessment stage.

*Exhibitions*

- 13.5.21 To maximise the value of exhibitions it is vital they are advertised and promoted fully with sufficient notice given to allow people to plan to attend. It is suggested that the optimum time for advertising is one week prior to commencement.

- 13.5.22 The exhibition venues need to be easily accessible for all people. They also need to be located so as to capture 'passing trade'. The opening times of the exhibitions needs to allow each group in the community to attend.

*Newsletter/Leaflet*

- 13.5.23 Newsletters and leaflets are a tool for informing, for instance of the study progress and the outcomes from certain stages. A newsletter can also be used to engage people, for instance through inclusion of a questionnaire.

- 13.5.24 Depending on the size of the study area and the nature of the problems and issues, it may be appropriate to tailor elements of the contents according to geographical area.

- 13.5.25 The various methods of distribution (for instance in a free newspaper; by Royal Mail) have different implications in terms of cost, time-scale and degree of coverage. This is a key consideration in the decision on whether to newsletter/leaflet drop an entire area.

*Public Relations/Media Strategy/Advertising*

- 13.5.26 Positive media management can be used to raise awareness of a study and disseminate and promote ideas. It can also be a useful tool for advertising progress and inviting involvement, for instance in exhibitions. A well managed media and public relations strategy, which is proactive as opposed to reactive, can be key to the success of a project.

- 13.5.27 The use of a specialist media or public relations consultancy should be a serious consideration for studies that are likely to assume a high profile.

*Web Sites & Phone/Fax Lines*

- 13.5.28 Any information posted on web sites must be easily accessible. By the same token, it must be easy to make full use of any phone line by keeping the cost of calls low and inviting callers either to leave a message or to send a fax.

*Branding*

- 13.5.29 Developing a consistent branding for the study can help to raise the profile and awareness of it. It will ensure coherence between the different participation and consultation methods. Overall it can serve to heighten the impact of the participation and consultation process.

**Approach**

- 13.5.30 In deciding on which method, or combination of methods, to use, a number of factors should be addressed.

*The Imperative for Involvement*

- 13.5.31 It cannot be assumed that people, particularly members of the wider public, will automatically be interested in becoming involved in the participation and consultation process and in contributing to the outcome of a study. It may be that the issues are perceived as too strategic to be of interest or relevance to their own day-to-day life. Effort may need to be devoted to 'selling' involvement to potential participants, for instance highlighting the effects of inaction on their lifestyle and perhaps quality of life or the potential benefits of taking part.

*Managing Expectations*

- 13.5.32 It is necessary to ensure that everyone understands the reasons for involvement, in the overall process and its individual components, and the scope and limit of the opportunities on offer. People must have a realistic picture of what they can and cannot influence, what the output of their involvement is going to be, and what the time scale for this is, including the likely implementation of a proposal.

*Managing the Scale and Nature of Involvement*

- 13.5.33 In many cases interest in a proposed development will be great. The appropriate methods of involvement will depend to an extent on the size of the group concerned. For instance, where there is a reference group a judgement may have to be made on the optimum size. It may be appropriate to stratify the group into a smaller, core group and a wider, outer, group. Different methods of involvement could be used for each.

### *Dealing with Different Agendas*

- 13.5.34 Different people involved in the process are likely to have different agendas. A comparison of business interests versus the interest of the wider public is likely to illustrate this.
- 13.5.35 It is generally not advisable to segment participation in the process according to interest. Juxtaposing people with different views is beneficial as it allows for differences to be challenged, which can facilitate an understanding, if not acceptance, of other viewpoints. It can lead to a more reasoned, informed, debate and greater acceptance of the study outcome.
- 13.5.36 The exception to this is where particular issues are prominent. For example, where economic issues are of importance, it may be more appropriate to involve businesses separately from others. Where particular issues affect identified geographical areas it may also be appropriate to involve groups separately. This can help to ensure that the issues of particular, perhaps localised, importance are paid due attention.

### *NIMBYism*

- 13.5.37 People involved in the process (especially members of the wider public) are likely to have a high level of awareness and concern about the impact of any proposal on their immediate surroundings. These concerns must be addressed. Many may not be fully aware of the strategic impacts of the proposal and it may prove difficult to engage them in discussing these issues. Care needs to be taken in developing the process in such a way as to maximise understanding of the strategic issues.

### *From Problems to Solutions*

- 13.5.38 Debate and discussion of problems can form a valuable part of the process. It is equally important to involve people in developing and assessing solutions. This is often more difficult to achieve and may require use of more innovative methods. Provision of information prior to an exercise, for example outlining the problems and suggesting some solutions, can be useful in this respect.

### *Time for Response?*

- 13.5.39 If people are to be invited to submit their views on a proposal for example through a questionnaire, sufficient time must be given for replies. The Scottish Executive's policy is 12 weeks although other established statutory requirements may be applicable and there may be situations where shorter periods may be appropriate. Where a period of less than 12 weeks is being considered agreement should be obtained from the Scottish Executive.
- 13.5.40 Whatever the consultation period it will be important that the consultation documents are available in alternative media and formats at the start of the consultation period. If this is not done then some people will be excluded from the consultation process.

*How Representative is the Response?*

- 13.5.41 Recruiting for participation can ensure a representative sample. On the basis of this, robust conclusions can be drawn and generalisations made. Methods which are open to response from anyone, such as a questionnaire in a newsletter dropped door-to-door, are likely to result in a response that is biased towards certain segments of the population.
- 13.5.42 The inclusion of socio-demographic questions on a questionnaire can be used to assess the nature of response and, with care, to weight answers submitted so as to counteract any expected bias.
- 13.5.43 Caution needs to be exercised in drawing conclusions from methods which do not elicit a representative response. An appropriate reaction in this case may be to embark on a specific exercise (such as a household survey) where representative sampling can be guaranteed.

*Feedback*

- 13.5.44 Involvement is a two-way process. It is essential to inform (and to keep informed) participants of their contribution to the process, as well as of the views of others. There must be transparency in how the participation and consultation process is shaping the study. Such feedback will help to ensure that people see their contribution as worthwhile.
- 13.5.45 Methods for this include a written response to people who have been involved, whether in a focus group or through submission of a letter, to express thanks for their involvement and stating how it will contribute to the study. Another option is the circulation to everyone in the study area of a newsletter containing summary information on the outcomes of a particular stage in the process.
- 13.5.46 It is useful to establish a consultee database. The details of all participants in the process, from those who have attended focus groups to those who have submitted a questionnaire response, can be recorded and kept involved throughout.

*Continuing Involvement*

- 13.5.47 People need to be informed of the final outcome of the study. The process should continue beyond this, albeit to a lesser extent, with people informed of progress. Without this people may begin to feel disenfranchised.
- 13.5.48 It will be necessary to monitor and evaluate the implementation of a proposal on people and their views and opinions.

