

Identifying the stakeholders for your project

This exercise gets people thinking about who the stakeholders for their project might be, whether they would be supportive or not, and how to engage with them. It identifies both individuals and groups, and ensures that wider stakeholders of interest, who may not be geographically local to the project, are taken into account. You will use the results of this exercise to input into the exercise about your communication strategy.

You should carry out this exercise when you have narrowed down the options for technologies, and you may have to run it twice if you are looking at more than one technology, as the stakeholders could be very different.

Initially split into groups of not more than 10, then whole audience feedback

Time needed

To complete this exercise, you will need 55 to 70 minutes

- Stage 1) Grouping and explaining (10 minutes)
- Stage 2) Brainstorming and posting-up (15 minutes)
- Stage 3) Mapping stakeholders (15-30 minutes)
- Stage 4) Brief communications plan and finding volunteers (10 minutes)
- Stage 5) Dealing with the 'neutral space' (5 minutes)

Films that accompany this exercise

- 'Running a community consultation' (disc 2): optional
- 'Community Consultation: A cautionary tale' (disc 2): optional

Materials needed

- Six sheets of flipchart paper hung together on the wall and marked up with the stakeholder

management table (**Table 1**, below) plus enough blank sheets to hide them). Don't be tempted to make this smaller

- One A3 printed copy of the **Stakeholder Text** (below)
- A flipchart sheet with **Table 2 headings** written on it
- Post-it notes in three colours, enough for each group to have lots each
- Sticky dots in a single bright colour like red or orange, several for each group
- Marker pens or thick felt tipped pens for each group
- Blu-tac or masking tape

Arranging the room

Groups should be arranged around tables, or so that they can pull their chairs near to each other.

Put the set of flipcharts with Table 1 on it up on the wall, along with your printed copy of Sheet 1 (at least A3 sized) and a spare flipchart sheet for Table 3 – hide all with blank flipchart paper until you are ready to start the exercise.

People needed to run the exercise

This will need a lead facilitator and a separate recorder, if at all possible.

Running the exercise

Stage 1: Grouping and explaining (10 mins)

Explain to the audience that you are going to think about all the individuals, groups and organisations who might be stakeholders in the project you are planning. Tell them to refer to the 'Definition of a stakeholder' sheet, drawing their attention to the colour-coding (which colour post-it note should be used for which type of stakeholder).

Warning. This is a potentially tricky exercise, as potential key individual stakeholders might be in the room with you. You will need to use your common sense about how to manage this. If you feel that there is a key stakeholder present who is likely to have objections to your project, it could be very inflammatory to label them as 'unsupportive' and/or 'not influential'.

There are two ways you can manage this. The first is to, carry out this exercise as a **core group only**, as part of your 'living-room' phase (see introductory section of this folder). This will reduce the risk of offending anyone or creating tension or conflict, but comes with the risk that you will identify fewer key stakeholders because fewer minds have been devoted to the task, and also that you will develop a communications strategy 'in secret'.

The alternative is to carry out this exercise at a **public event**, but use the 'neutral space' option described in Stage 3 of the instructions. Your communications strategy will be public knowledge, but the openness of your approach will be unassailable.

Break them into groups (by using a group-splitting process or asking them to choose which group to join themselves).

Setting up the groups and explaining this should take not more than 10 minutes.

Stage 2) Carrying out the exercise

Ask the groups to spend 10 minutes writing down who they think are stakeholders on different colours of post-it notes (as specified on the Stakeholder Text opposite), and to add a sticky dot to any post-it note that names a person (or a representative of any organisation) who is actually present. Remind them that stakeholders aren't necessarily local.

Then ask the groups one by one to come and put their post-it notes on the wall next to your covered-up Table 1. If they can see that someone else has already named that stakeholder, they should put the post-it note on top of that one, so you end up with small 'piles' where the same stakeholder has been identified several times.

Allow 15 minutes for Stage 2.

Stage 3) Mapping the stakeholders

Stage 3, step 1) Creating a neutral space for named individuals

Now unveil your large version of Table 1, and explain that you are going to start by putting every **Individual Stakeholder** who has been identified as being in the room down in the section called 'Neutral Space'. These will be identified by sticky dots.

Then make it clear that those people will not be asked to position themselves on the diagram **even if they want to**. This is very important and you should explain that it is in order to avoid an unpleasant for-and-against tension, and it also puts those identified as key stakeholders who are less decided in an uncomfortable position.

Make clear that you will return to those individuals in neutral space at the end of the exercise.

Stage 3, step 2) Allowing representatives of groups to position themselves

Some groups or organisation stakeholders may also have been marked with sticky dots. If there is an individual present who can 'speak for' that group, for example, the head teacher of a school, or a member of the local kayak

club (if a hydro project is on the cards), offer them the option of positioning their group or organisation on the diagram. This is less contentious as they are speaking for a group rather than themselves, but note that they may not want to commit to a position without discussing this with other members of the group.

If they do want to position their group on the diagram, then give them some help with understanding the axes (see guidance in the box).

Stage 3, step 3) Dealing with the remaining identified stakeholders

Start with individuals – as you pick them up, first call out the name and ask if that person is actually in the room. (Some may not have been identified by name e.g. "the farmer who owns the land that the river runs through", and they might turn out to be in the room after all). If they are, put them in neutral space for now.

If they aren't present, facilitate a discussion around where they should go on the diagram, using the guidance in the box. Try not to spend ages on each post-it note – this exercise is to guide initial engagement with those groups and subsequent work could show that they are more or less supportive than you thought.

You will end up with something that looks like the version of **Table 1** (overleaf) with the coloured rectangles that represent post-it notes, before the circles have been drawn on, where those against the project tend to be on the 'strongly opposed' side, but those who might support the project will be more evenly spread.

Allow between 15 and 30 minutes for this stage.

Stage 4) Brief communications strategy, and engaging volunteers

Explain that, as the people who want to get this project off the ground, you are clearly going to want to engage in a communications strategy that moves people up to the top right of the diagram – strongly supportive of it, and with as much influence as possible.

Acknowledge that there may be some in the room who do not wish to see the project succeed, at least in the form currently under discussion, but that you hope that they will be open to discussion and negotiation on the issues that concern them.

Begin now to identify clusters of stakeholders who will have different communications needs, by drawing circles

around the groups of post-it notes. Explain that you are hoping for volunteers to engage with them. Explain that, at this stage you are not discussing in any depth how you will engage with them, you are merely outlining the challenges and opportunities for each group and hoping to bring people on board to work in more detail on communicating with the different stakeholders.

Have your recorder populate **Table 2** as you facilitate this discussion. The completed example of Table 2 overleaf gives you the sort of level of detail you are looking for at this stage.

Ask anyone who has volunteered to ensure that you have their contact details before they leave the event.

Allow 10 minutes for this stage – remember, you are keeping it brief because the main aim is to get volunteers who will work through it in more detail.

Stage 5) Dealing with those in neutral space

Finally, come back to the set of post-it notes in neutral space. Stress again that you aren't going to ask them to position themselves on the diagram and ask them if they would be willing for you to contact them individually after the event to discuss their views and what further information you can give them to increase their level of support for the project. The worst that can happen at this stage is that someone strongly against the project says "No, I am happy for everyone here to know that I hate this whole idea and will use all my influence to prevent it and I refuse to discuss it any further." If that happens, stay calm and say that you regret that they feel that way, and that you would like to maintain open communication channels if possible.

For everyone else, arrange to discuss with them either at the very end of the event or some time in the next few days and then you can include them on the diagram when you write up the event.

Stakeholder text: write this text on a sheet of A3 paper or flipchart, and with the colours of your post-it notes filled in

Definition of a Stakeholder

A stakeholder is any person, group or organisation that will be affected by, or has the ability to affect, our project.

Your task:

On different coloured post-it notes, note the following stakeholders:

Stakeholder type 1: Key individuals

Who are the key individuals who could be affected by the project, or have a significant effect on it. This includes individuals with influence (local MP, pub landlord etc) and those who might be affected by the project (close residents, users of a facility etc).

Use _____ coloured post-it notes for this group

Stakeholder type 2: Groups

Which groups who come together for a certain activity, like the local history society, WI, birdwatching club, Girl Guides etc may have a view on your project?

Use _____ coloured post-it notes for this group

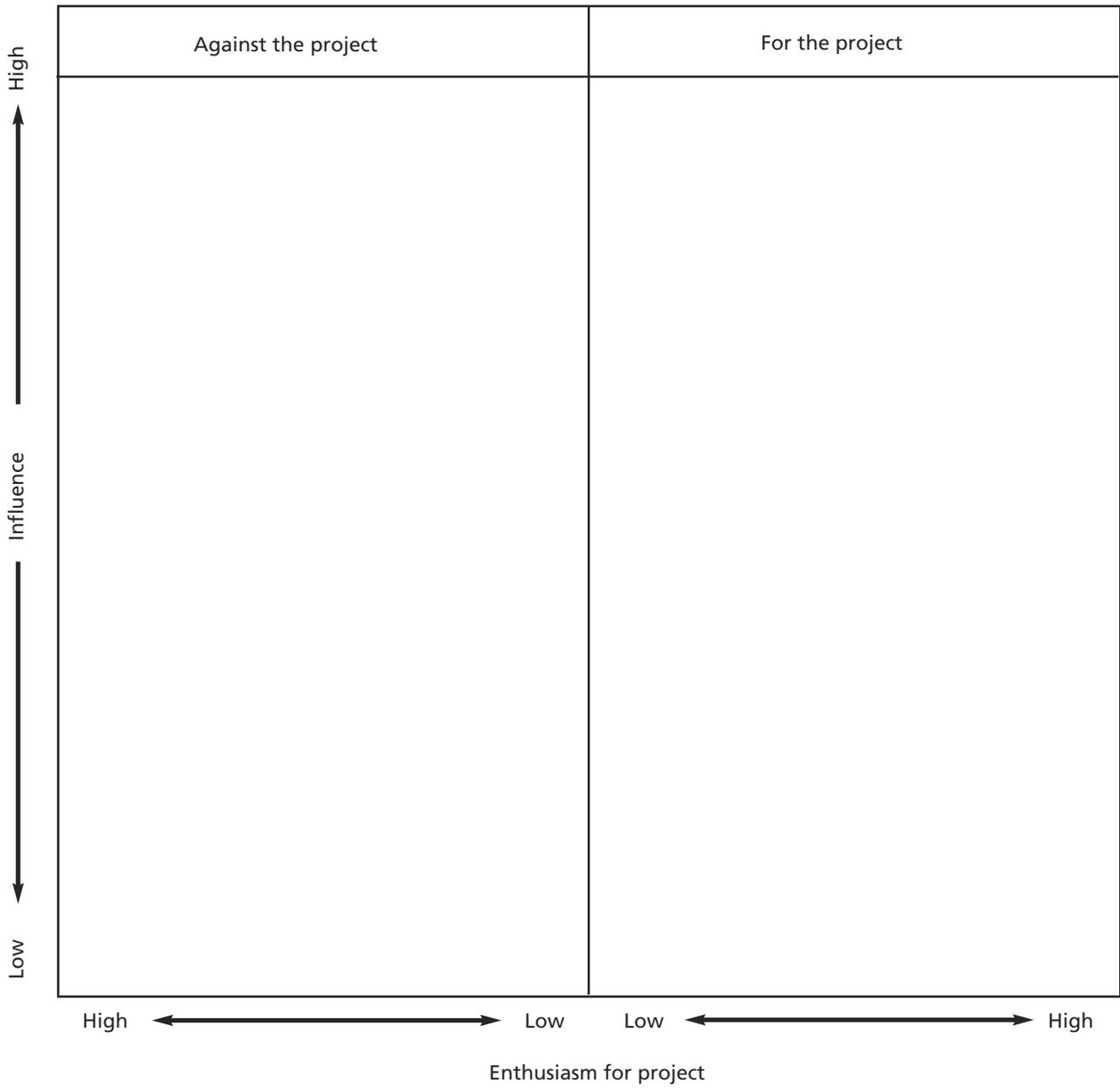
Stakeholder type 3: Organisations

And what official bodies (local authority, parish council, schools, colleges, Ramblers Association, CPRE) can be considered stakeholders?

Use _____ coloured post-it notes for this group

Put a sticky dot on any post-it note where you have named someone who is attending this meeting (or a representative of the group is here).

Table 1



When all the post-it notes are stuck to it, Table 1 will look a bit like this ...

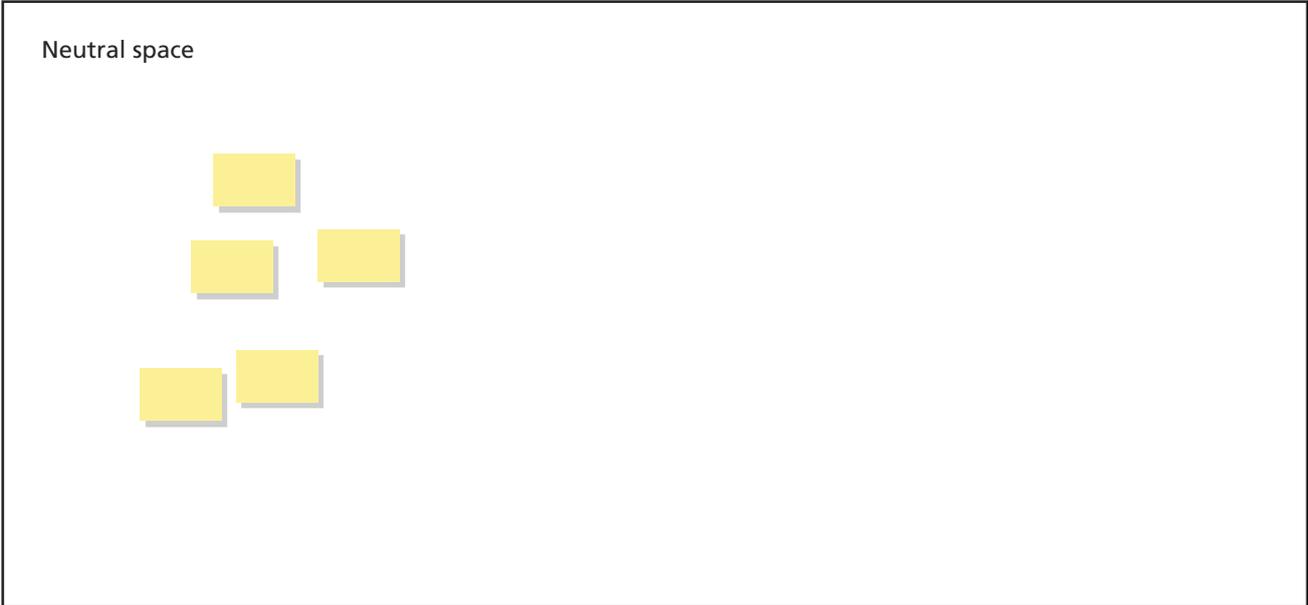
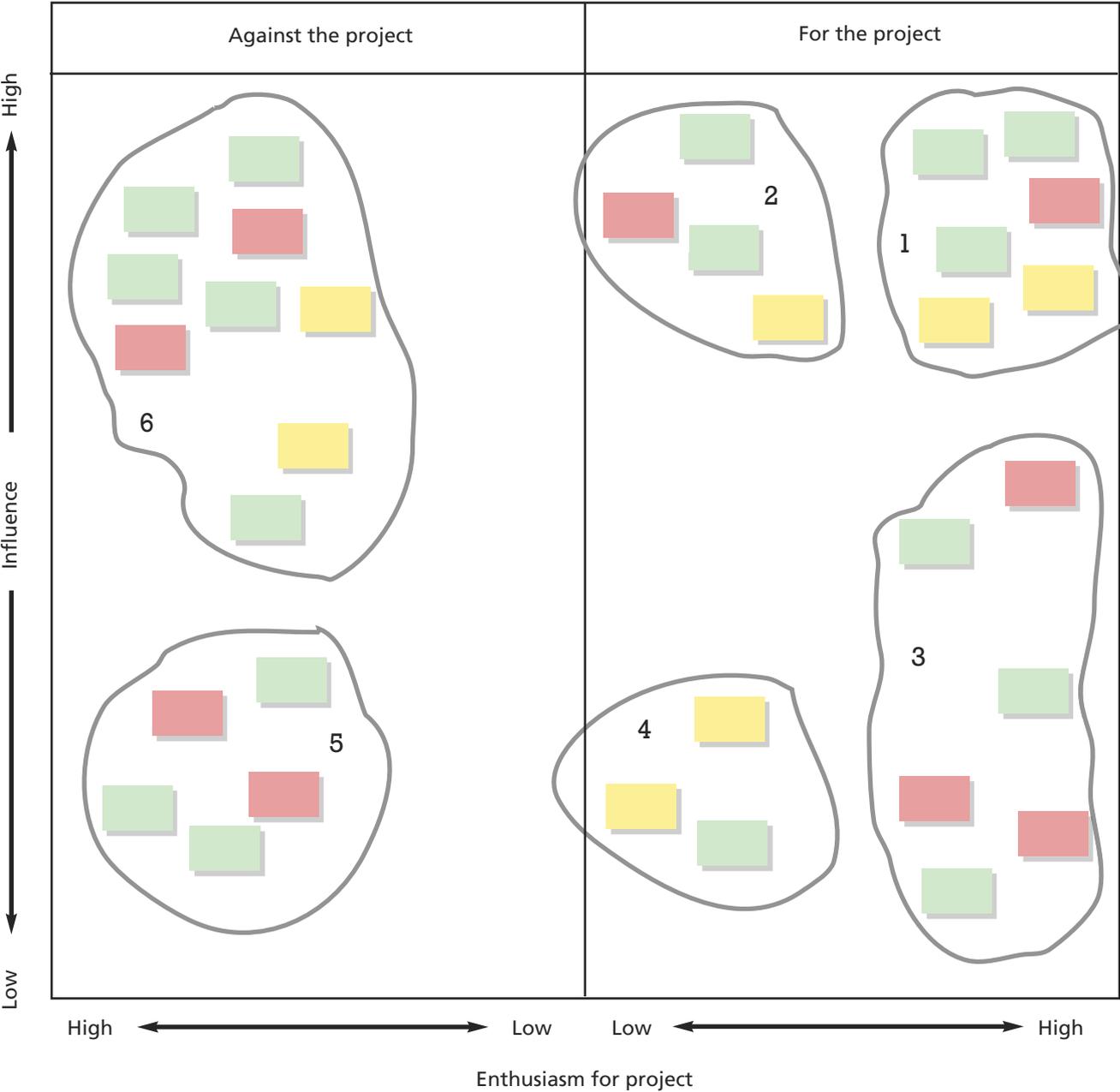


Table 2

Where on diagram	Who are they?	Brief engagement strategy?	Do we need volunteers to help with this?
Circle 1 Top right	Strongly supportive and influential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't neglect just because already on our side. • Make sure they have information they need to influence key decisions at the right time. • Keep them up to date with all progress and make sure they know their support is valued. 	Communications with this group can probably be managed by the core team who are already dealing with advertising events etc
Circle 2 Inside top right	Weakly supportive and influential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to move them across to a more strongly supportive position so they will use their influence in favour of the project. • Hold individual meetings • Provide tailored information • Give presentations at groups and organisations 	<p>Need volunteers to work with these stakeholders to improve level of support</p> <p>Volunteers names will go in this box</p>
Circle 3 Bottom right	Strongly supportive but not influential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These stakeholders are very keen to support the project but not currently in a position to have a great deal of influence on others. • How can we improve their influence? • Suggest communications channels they could use (e.g. school children inviting parents into school for a presentation) 	<p>Need volunteers to work with these stakeholders to improve influence</p> <p>Volunteers names will go in this box</p>
Circle 4 Inside bottom right	Weakly supportive but not influential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The aim here is a combination of the tactics for circles 2 and 3: improve their level of support for the project, and give them tools to increase their influence. 	<p>Need volunteers to work with these stakeholders to improve both support and influence</p> <p>Volunteers names will go in this box</p>
Circle 5 Top left	Strongly opposed and influential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is the key group to influence in the early stages. • Must get to the bottom of their opposition and try to assuage any concerns they might have. • Our group must be willing to compromise, and work with them to investigate their concerns and see if they are well-founded • Must work to offer them information and support where we believe their concerns do not have a basis in fact. • Think about using mediation services for meetings? 	<p>Need volunteers to work with these stakeholders to understand and address concerns, and improve level of support if possible.</p> <p>Volunteers names will go in this box</p>
Circle 6 Bottom left	Strongly opposed but not influential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very similar to approach for those in circle 5, but, if time and resources are short then efforts must be concentrated on those with more influence 	<p>Need volunteers to work with these stakeholders to understand and address concerns, and improve level of support if possible.</p> <p>Volunteers names will go in this box</p>