

## CONFLICT OR CONSENSUS: SOME QUICK CAMEOS

*There now exists a remarkably long list of examples that can be used to make a direct comparison between traditional, conflict-based approaches to advancing environmental initiatives ('Decide-Announce-Defend') and approaches based on consensus building through collaborative working ('Engage-Deliberate-Decide').*

*The chart below offers short 'cameos' of just some of these projects, in each case with a direct comparison of approaches taken. Some are BDOR projects, some were provided by network colleagues. As a matter of courtesy, the projects are anonymous. (Some of these examples are already written up more fully elsewhere.)*

<b>DECIDE-ANNOUNCE-DEFEND EXAMPLE</b>	<b>ENGAGE-DELIBERATE-DECIDE EXAMPLE</b>
City council A, aiming to expand its city centre controlled parking zone, commissioned consultants who then presented their results as a fair accompli. Residents and businesses totally rejected the proposals and the plans were scrapped.	The adjacent council B wanted to expand its parking zone, initiated up-front and coherent community and stakeholder involvement and ended up with a fully agreed scheme, implemented only 10 months later.
Several Coastal Management Plans for protected areas were commissioned in the 1990s. Most plans were developed totally in-house, failed to gain stakeholder support and went almost nowhere in practice.	A thorough and wide-ranging stakeholder dialogue was established, an agreed plan emerged and, even before it was formally published, a medley of local collaborative initiatives were underway. Even after 10 years, collaborative working is still used regularly as new issues arise,
All AONB teams have struggled with conflict and dissent on issues around access to the countryside. Most early plans failed to address the issue or included policies that were eventually not implemented.	Access officers and representatives of ramblers, farmers, CPRE, horse riders and many others worked together to literally write agreed policies, now supported through to implementation
Many local planning authorities spent upwards of £500,000 each on their statutory plan Inquiries, mostly to pay for barristers. It was common for key policies to change as a result of this lengthy process.	In authority C, the team developed a complex collaborative process that involved the potential key objectors from the outset and reached agreement on many aspects. The result was a dramatic reduction in the number of objections and significant reduction in the cost and time of the Inquiry.
In authority D a supermarket company tried for several years to drive a proposal through against the wishes of the community, the planning authority and the Council as a whole – all without success and at considerable cost to all involved	In authority E a different supermarket company and local planning authority shared cost and commitment to an engagement process that so speeded progress towards an agreed solution and an acceptable application that the company saved many months interest charges – which it contributed to the community in the form of a high quality local facility.
In authority F a small community (of barely 350 people) raised the largest objection to their area's local plan because it proposed 26 new houses for their village.	Further work on a Village Design Statement with the village community generated an agreed plan for the village that included an additional 42 houses.
In an area of some 500 houses, 17 <sup>th</sup> century stone mines close below the surface threatened extremely damaging subsidence. The authority attempted to impose a solution to infill the mines and generated vigorous protest and resistance.	A new team was brought in, rebuilt confidence in all parties, brought them together and helped to generate a new, multi-party group and an agreed way forward, since fully funded by government and now complete.

<p>Several attempts had been made in recent years to advance large scale town expansion projects in authority G. Many were developed traditionally by consultants, announced once proposals were complete, resisted by local people and then scrapped.</p>	<p>Authority G, working with two government agencies, sought to develop proposals to almost double a 'Primary Urban Area'. The consultant team took a collaborative approach from day one and, when needing to check the ambition with stakeholders, ran a workshop at which all involved opted to support the highest possible targets for jobs and houses.</p>
<p>Authority H, anticipating increased traffic flows associated with a controversial new development, launched plans which included what they saw as a much-needed new bus lane and associated bus-controlled traffic signals. Local residents became alarmed and got up a petition, local newspapers were full of the controversy and there were concerns that a forthcoming planning meeting would degenerate into chaos. The authority's traffic department observed that many objections to the scheme appeared to be based on incorrect information and proposed to defend the plans simply by providing people with "the facts".</p>	<p>The planning department called in a third party to meet residents and other local stakeholders and listen to their concerns. A perceived history of the traffic department "always knowing better" emerged. Once the authority came to terms with this, public forums and a staffed exhibition were held in the local school to hear people's concerns and provide answers to their questions. In the largest of these gatherings, a representative of the traffic department publicly apologised for his previous failure to listen and undertook to change the plans and have further consultations on its details. The atmosphere was transformed, the plans were changed and the planning meeting was able to approve these in a calm and businesslike atmosphere.</p>
<p>Over 30 years of open "warfare" between pro and anti nuclear groups meant there had never been any dialogue between them. The nuclear industry had a strategy for how the UK's nuclear power stations should be decommissioned at the end of their life. This was not shared or agreed by national interest groups and stakeholders.</p>	<p>The nuclear industry and UK government realised they had to gain some form of agreement or acknowledgement for their approach to decommissioning. The main anti-nuclear groups decided to join a managed dialogue process. This lasted some 4 years and reached broad/outline agreements. Not everyone is totally happy but 30 years of "warfare" is replaced by disagreements over "details" and timing.</p>
<p>A proposal to alleviate annual flooding in a major historical UK city was supported by authority I but opposed by authorities J, K, L, M and N, and many agencies and communities. Nothing was done for 6 years, flooding happened almost every year with huge expense to pump the floodwater away.</p>	<p>Authority I finally realised that they could not just push things through. A dialogue process was initiated with all stakeholders involved. 6 months later all parties agreed on a revised scheme. The scheme secured government approval and 1 year later was constructed at a cost of some £11m.</p>
<p>Authority O was aiming to improve a local 'park' (really just a huge area of poor quality grass) by selling some of the land for housing and using the money for the improvements. The principle was accepted (reluctantly) by the local community and external consultants were appointed to produce a masterplan. There was no consultation at all so the outcome was huge and widespread objections to what was proposed. The consultants left and several hundred thousands of pounds were wasted</p>	<p>Following a year in which new engagement consultants put the process and relationships back on track, the next set of proposals by a new team of technical consultants was developed through a wide-ranging and continuous involvement process. It went through difficult times but when the planning application was made there were – according to the development control officer – "staggeringly few" objections.</p>

<p>A major national body wished to expand its art gallery premises in a highly valued environmental setting with a strong and active community. Although they undertook some involvement work, the rather radical designs were sprung on local people. This generated a significant negative reaction which included the formation of a new and specific protest group.</p>	<p>To recover from this position the organisation set up a new local 'Steering Group' reflecting many different views and including a representative of the new protest group. With help from a process manager, the Steering Group designed a new consultation process, arrange a variety of local; events and, by the end of a year, had "totally transformed the relationship between the gallery and the town".</p>
<p>A water company knew that an area needed a new sewage works, in fact local people were calling for one. The manager approached a Parish Council suggesting a site in their area but was rejected. He then did this another 14 times, always with the same negative response.</p>	<p>A new manager came in and brought together representatives from all 15 Parish Council, with people from environmental groups and technical experts. After a series of meetings over 9 months a clear preferred site emerged and was agreed (even by the recipient parish), As no Inquiry was need the money kept back for that was used to build the works with an extremely high standard of landscaping and to forthcoming (higher) European standards rather than current ones.</p>
<p>Authority P had struggled for years to find sites for housing in a small town. An offered site was outside the 'settlement boundary' but the site inside the boundary would have to be accessed through an estate, losing one house to do so. This has all caused considerable local friction.</p>	<p>Using an outside facilitator, a workshop was held between local councillors, land owners, residents and planners. A fully agreed proposal emerged for a site partly within both land holdings (financial benefit to both), requiring an insignificant amendment to the settlement boundary and accessible without losing a house.</p>
<p>Complaints were coming in every day about a landfill site. There were problems with odour and the local community wanted the site shut down. The news that the site was planning to extend and double its capacity only increased the level of aggravation locally, exacerbated by a traditional Public Meeting.</p>	<p>A new operator took over and decided to change tack and work closely with the community, taking time to build trust, explain everybody's role and what we was being done to tackle the problems. The Environment Agency worked closely with the operator and the community to set up a Liaison Group to talk about any issues or problems and to keep the community up to date with how the site is being managed and regulated. Complaints ceased and there are now trusting and friendly Liaison Group meetings.</p>