

## 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 'decide/announce/defend', conflict-based approaches to advancing environmental initiatives and approaches based on consensus building through collaborative working ('Engage-Deliberate-Decide').

The chart below offers short 'cameos' of 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 MODEL</b>	<b>ENGAGE/DELIBERATE/DECIDE MODEL</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 plan 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.	In another case 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.
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.	In another case, access officers and representatives of ramblers, farmers, CPRE and horse riders worked together to literally write agreed policies, now supported through to implementation
Many local planning authorities spent upwards of £500,000 each on their 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 – now fully funded by the government.

<p>Several attempts have been made in recent years to advance large scale town expansion projects. 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>The government set targets for wind power in the UK. Lots of ad hoc, on-shore developments are proposed by developers in response. Nearly all are objected to on various grounds.</p>	<p>The government looks longer term and sees the huge potential for off-shore wind farms. Working with a collaborative approach to involving all key stakeholders at a national level, the groundwork is laid for selling permits for off-shore wind farm developments. So far, no major objections have made the news.</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 realise they have to gain some form of agreement or acknowledgement for their approach to decommissioning. The main anti-nuclear groups have to decide to contribute their ideas or stay outside "the door" while the industry carries on on their path. Dialogue starts, lasts some 4 years and reaches broad/outline agreements. Not everyone is totally happy but 30 years of "warfare" is replaced by disagreements over "details" and timing.</p>
<p>There has been at last 30 years of dispute over the environmental and health effects of electromagnetic fields from overhead power lines and electrical appliances and installations. The government industry stayed in total denial and refused to talk to "the other side".</p>	<p>Tentative first steps to starting a dialogue with all main parties/stakeholders started in 2004. In 2005 the process secured government "approval" and semi-formal status with an aim to reach a consensus/agreement on advice to government for precautionary approaches and policies the UK should adopt. (Ongoing)</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. The Steering Group designed a new consultation process, helped to arrange a variety of local events and, by the end of a year had “totally transformed the relationship between .... and the town”.</p>