

## **Multiple Stakeholder Management: The Rules of Engagement**

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### **The research context**

Whereas traditionally land previously used for mineral extraction was restored to its original use, most commonly agriculture, since the 1980s a variety of end uses have been adopted ranging from nature conservation to housing to forestry (Wilson, 1986; Box, 1996). Although agriculture was still found to be a popular option there has been a marked increase in adoption of other soft end use options including nature conservation and amenity. In addition, the increasing preference for mixed end use for example combining farming with nature conservation or informal leisure was a further trend identified. It should be noted that case studies were carefully selected using criteria which included sites having a range of options available for restoration. Therefore, the decision-making process behind end use choice was found to be complex and in many ways agrees with McDougall's (1997) belief that options are only limited by the imagination of those involved.

This shift in end use has caused a number of indirect outcomes, for example previously private land (e.g. agriculture) has come into the public domain (e.g. water-sports provision) which in turn meets a perceived need and goes some way towards altering the perceptions of those involved. In addition, new end use options fit well with current thinking on environmental improvement and the sustainability agenda. However, for the purpose of this research, the most interesting consequence of shifting end use trends is their ability to act as a catalyst for stakeholder interaction and therefore affect the decision-making process surrounding land use change.

All of the decision-making processes studied were environmentally driven in that stakeholder interaction centred on a piece of land. The shift in end use trends to a greater range of options has led to an increased number and variety of stakeholders becoming involved in the decision-making process, therefore making stakeholder management (partnership or engagement) an increasingly relevant issue. The research sought to determine the reality of stakeholder interaction and influence within a land use change context whilst considering the decreasing popularity of stakeholder management and a movement towards engagement suggested in the literature. This paper will focus on the research findings and outcomes, for a review of related literature please see previous papers (Curzon, 2003, 2004, 2006, 2008, 2009).

### **Summary of research methods**

**Case Studies:** Selection criteria (location, site size, end use type and the number of stakeholders involved) were developed to select seven case study sites in England. The chosen sites included one in Tyne and Wear, two in Nottinghamshire, two in Staffordshire, one on the Wiltshire/Gloucestershire border and one in London. Detailed information was collected through the case study process, which incorporated site visits, surveys and observations, and interviews with key stakeholders.

**Stakeholder Interviews:** The stakeholder concept was popularised when Freeman published his book "Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach" in 1984 (Andriof et al 2002). He defines a stakeholder as "any group or individual who can affect or who is affected by the achievement of the firms objectives" (p.30). Fifty five interviews were conducted during the research process with a variety of organisations including mineral companies, environmental organisations (Wildlife Trusts, the Environment Agency, Forestry Commission etc), Local

Authorities, local community plus many more. The interviews were semi structured and sought to gather information on the experience of the decision-making process and attitudes of different stakeholder groups.

### **The theory and practice of the three frameworks**

Three frameworks have been produced, all centred on the process of engagement which are both applicable in real life and make a contribution to the subject area both in an academic and practical context. The following discussion considers the significance of labelling of stakeholders, the function of hierarchies, the relevance of the continuum and the problems of barriers between levels of engagement and stakeholder groups.

### **Framework One: The Decision Making Continuum of Characteristics**

Case studies were grouped according to their demonstration of common actions or stories with each grouping subsequently being used to develop a range of characteristics (motivation, issues of interest and concern, key terms and descriptors) supported by stakeholder comments and extracts from the literature. The result is a continuum, a continuous series of elements. In this instance, characteristics - where adjacent decision-making processes have a number of similarities but those placed at each extremity from low level engagement (corporate social responsibility) to the highest level (interactive engagement) are very different.

The continuum illustrates a shift in characteristics from management through to engagement, showing how certain themes, for example environmental concerns, track across the varying approaches; in this case shifting from environmental improvement to environmental protection to meeting biodiversity targets. This framework maps the processes and characteristics found in the primary data and highlights both shared and unique features taking useful steps towards generating a theory on decision-making processes and the factors influencing them. The following sections discuss movement up and down the continuum including the factors causing such movement. Where appropriate, comments from stakeholder interviews will be used to support explanations.

### **Movement along the continuum**

As a further level of analysis, the stakeholder interviews were searched for comments which suggested the aspirations of those involved in each group of case studies in terms of what level of stakeholder engagement they would like to see adopted. This provided a useful means of determining the direction of movement along the continuum. The following provides an overview of these findings and supports the development of diagram 2, the second part of framework one, the movement along the continuum.

For example, those involved in the three case studies following a stakeholder management approach often believed that they were already in a partnership scenario and, if not, desired to be so. This suggests a movement along the continuum from low level engagement towards higher levels. This movement was also suggested in the literature (see McCabe *et al*, 1997) where networks were found to be formalised into partnerships. The interviewees for the single example of stakeholder engagement aspired to widen the partnership to include further groups in decision making and improve interaction and involvement, suggesting a movement towards higher levels of engagement: in fact, the highest level identified in the literature, that of stakeholder interaction. In order to achieve true interactive engagement, the Partnership would need to engage and distribute power between a wider range of stakeholders. It should be noted that interviewees were not aware of

the characteristics associated with 'stakeholder interaction'; they only stated how they saw existing stakeholder engagement being improved.

The three case studies representing a mid level of engagement were found to follow a partnership approach with limited aspirations beyond maintaining existing relations as all involved seemed content with the processes currently in place or had limited knowledge of other higher levels of engagement to which to aspire. This can therefore be summarised as follows: stakeholders involved in low level engagement wish to progress up the scale towards partnership, yet those in a partnership (or following an approach demonstrating such characteristics) are content to be static; cases demonstrating the highest level of engagement aspired to progress still further up the scale. This implies that movement along the continuum is from low levels of engagement towards higher levels. The only irregularity in this is the partnership stage where stakeholders may be content to reside with no desire to progress further up the scale. The diagram illustrates the direction of movement along the continuum and also the irregularity, static stage, at the partnership level – whether this is merely a zone of contentment or represents a lack of ambition to do more (in relation to improved stakeholder involvement) is difficult to determine but given the positive outcomes of the three partnership sites studied, and the nature of the interaction between those involved the suggestion is that it is a positive choice borne out of satisfaction.

The movement along the continuum to higher levels of engagement is supported by evidence from the stakeholder interviews. When respondents were asked whether attitudes towards working together had changed, many agreed that there had been a definite shift towards higher levels of interaction between a variety of groups. The Conservation Officer for English Nature stated that “...over the past 10 years there's been more of a drive to develop partnerships, a key word that was around at the time [it] was like leverage...”, with the Senior Estates Surveyor (Midlands Region) for Aggregate Industries adding “...its becoming more and more commonplace now that we're in partnership with different organisations”. This movement towards increased engagement and in particular the popularity of partnerships is perhaps best summarised by the Head of Planning for Gloucestershire County Council who believes that “today its very much a culture of having a nice big cuddly partnership...”. It should however be noted that some of those questioned were keen to point out that working together was not an innovative way of working: changes had occurred due to new attitudes and systems. For example, the Ecologist from Staffordshire County Council noted that there was “not a fundamental change because I think the goodwill was there at the outset but I think inevitably you develop a bit more trust in each other the more you work together so I think probably there's been more incorporation because of that” with the Planning and Estates Manager for Lafarge Aggregates describing the current situation as “working together's not new, it's a formal approach to what's happening anyway”.

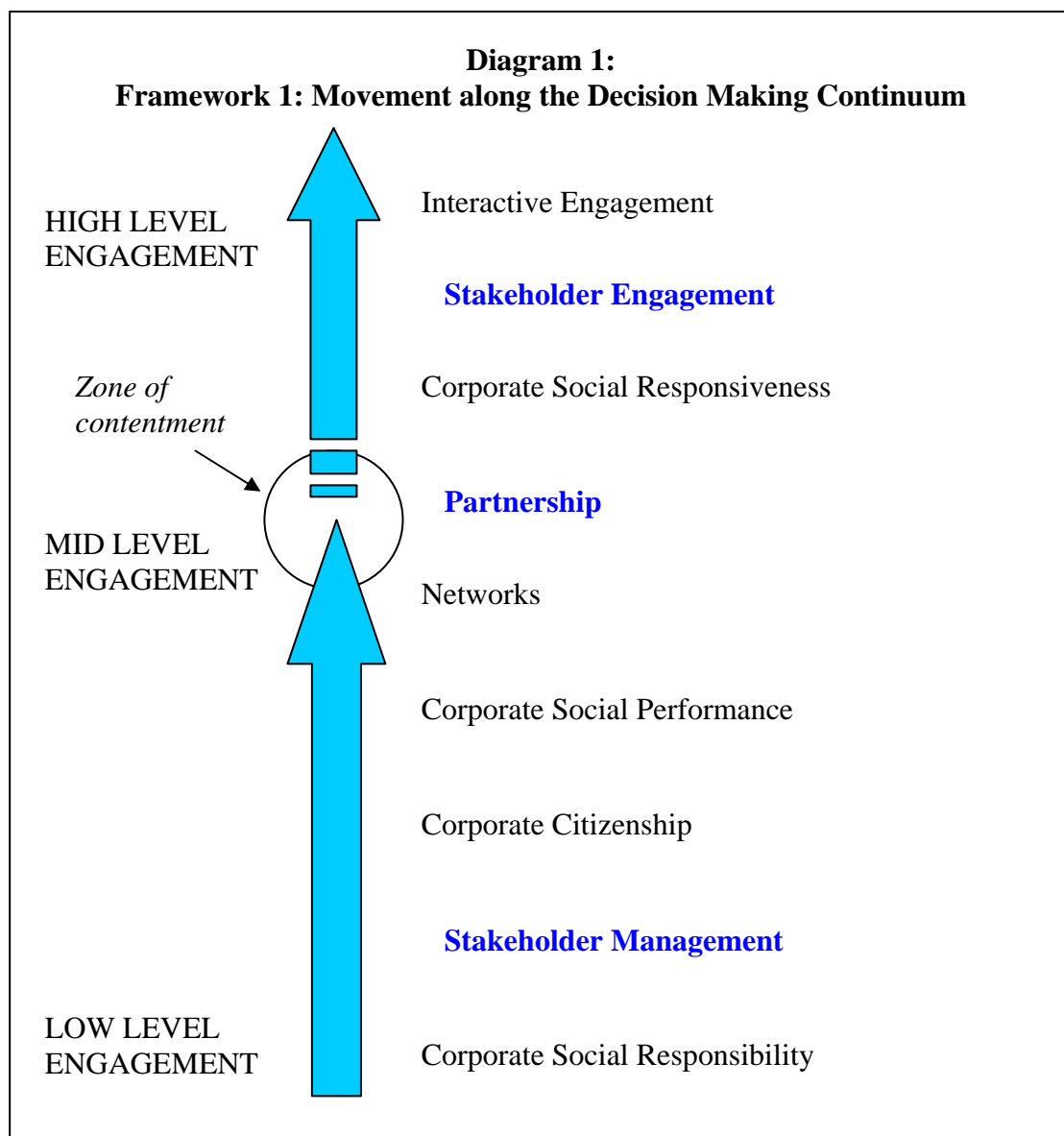
The evidence as illustrated on the diagrams strongly suggest that movement along the continuum is from low to high levels of engagement, with partnership being a particularly attractive option at present. The factors causing both the movement along the continuum and the static area around the partnership stage will be discussed in below in relation to framework two. It should be clearly stated at this point that there was no aspiration to retreat down the scale therefore suggesting that any such slippage must be the result of other factors which will also be identified and applied to framework two.

## **Summary – Framework One**

Framework one established a continuum moving from low levels of engagement (stakeholder management) to high levels of stakeholder engagement and also identified that the mid ground of partnership was the most popular aspiration for decision making. This clearly supported a trend towards partnerships. Higher levels of engagement offered more positive

outcomes ranging from environmental gain, to social benefits and reduced levels of vandalism. The experience of those involved at each level of engagement could also be seen as more positive when higher levels of engagement are adopted.

These differences could be described as a shift from the ‘private identity’ of sites with low level engagement strategies to the ‘public identity’ associated with high levels of engagement, defined by level and type of public access and sense of ownership. This is supported by the fact that although sites with higher levels of engagement had greater levels of public access, they suffered from less vandalism and misuse. In one of the mid range case study examples the local community took a rather vigilante approach towards vandalism on site, telling the site manager and landowner that the individuals responsible would be ‘dealt’ with. This suggests a strong feeling of pride and ownership, a real belief that the site belongs to the community and should therefore be cared for in an appropriate manner. This framework and associated supporting evidence suggest that adopting strategies that create high levels of engagement lead to positive outcomes for decision makers and site users.



Framework one is not prescriptive, it does not seek to suggest that every decision-making process for every piece of land should adopt a strategy of high level engagement; the best process (and therefore likely to create the most successful outcomes) is the one that is suitable

for the specific site and particular stakeholders involved. Framework two assists in this process by identifying the characteristics of each stage as well as potential barriers to achieving it. Thus some caution in the adoption of engagement strategies should be heeded as merely adopting a 'stakeholder engagement strategy' does not automatically create responsible practice (Greenwood, 2007). Genuine partnerships need to be based on trust; this would be very difficult in areas with a long history of bad feeling between stakeholders. In addition, some sites are more suited to higher levels of engagement than others (for example, land classification and proximity of stakeholders).

### **Framework Two: Charting the Stakeholder Engagement Process**

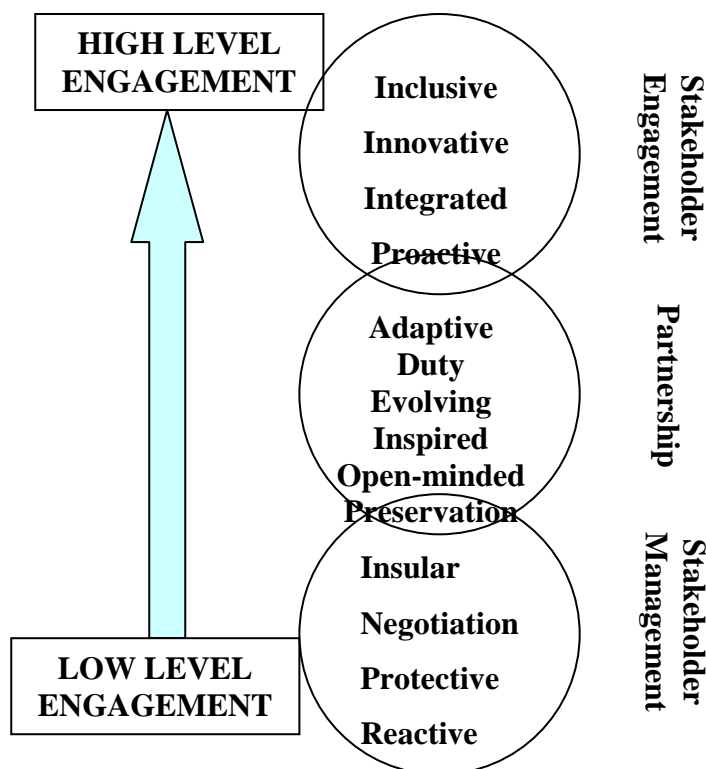
A series of diagrams that chart the stakeholder engagement process has been created which illustrate the shared and diverse characteristics between stakeholder management, partnership and engagement and factors influencing movement between the levels. The discussion is structured in a manner to best introduce each of the elements of the engagement process, including key terms and themes and factors influencing movement, supported by a series of diagrams that culminate in the second framework which charts the reality of the stakeholder engagement process.

### **Common and divergent key terms and themes**

The research (plus literature) defined stakeholder management, partnership and stakeholder engagement through the identification of a series of characteristics which were reduced to a number of key terms and themes. This section takes further steps towards charting the engagement process as found to operate in a land use context through the creation of a number of diagrams which fit together to become the second framework. Before the first diagram is introduced it should be explained that the aim is to produce a simple and therefore transferable model. Whereas the first framework mapped a range of levels from Corporate Social Responsibility to interactive engagement, all the diagrams from this section onwards focus on only three levels (stakeholder management, partnership and stakeholder engagement). These three stages are also the most strongly tied to the research findings and therefore offer a new insight into each of these approaches.

The first viewing of diagram 2 is likely to raise the question as to why the circles are clearly shown to overlap when no commonly occurring words were identified to occupy these overlapping areas. Although there were found to be no common terms associated with stakeholder management through partnership to engagement, there is a progression of terms and therefore actions. For example, stakeholder management was defined as 'reactive' whereas partnership was found to be both 'adaptive' and 'evolving' and finally, stakeholder engagement which can be described as 'proactive'. A clear example of the shift between the levels starts with the 'insular' and 'protective' nature of stakeholder management, characterised by an exclusive, single focussed, short term, fearful and controlling approach, followed by the 'open-minded' attitude of partnerships where there is a long term view, a consideration of the wider context and liaison and consultation with stakeholders. The final stage, stakeholder engagement, is characterised by an 'inclusive' and 'integrated' approach where a wide range of stakeholders are involved in meeting a long term shared vision. In simple terms, there is a shift in attitude to stakeholder involvement from exclusive through liaison to inclusive and also in the number of stakeholders included in the decision-making process. Additionally, these examples demonstrate a shift from a short term single focussed approach to a much wider long term vision.

**Diagram 2:  
Framework 2 – Key Terms**



**Framework 2: Definition of key terms**

Adaptive - pursue best option, change over time, meet needs, adopt new targets, negotiate, consult, balance

Duty - legal responsibilities, moral duty, statutory processes, fixed membership, formal procedures

Evolving - change over time, progressive development, evolving relationships

Inclusive - public participation, involvement of wide range of stakeholders, use of specialist advice, value placed on external participation and knowledge, inclusive and integrated approach to decision making, pursuit of common objectives, importance of individuals, decisions made by consensus

Innovative - willingness to create innovative ways, challenges seen as opportunities, bespoke programme tailor-made to area needs, ability to respond to changing circumstances over time, recognition new approach needed and creation of long term strategy for landscape change, catalyst/stimuli, become example of good practice

Inspired - catalyst, stakeholder-led, importance of individual, inspiration, personal vision, ambition, determination/drive,

Insular - short term, single focus, one-sided, exclusive

Integrated - Create integrated approach in a broader context, achieve local community benefits and meet needs, balance competing interests, increase public access and accessibility, formal agreements underline decision making and management processes, shared vision and concerns

Negotiation - consider, consult, liaise

Open-minded - consider wider context, gather knowledge through public meetings, liaison committees and consulting experts, consider different end use options, voluntary adoption of targets, informal relationships

Preservation - long term attachment to site, maintain partnerships, consider long term

Proactive - use of proactive methods to inform and engage with stakeholders, early consultation, use of promotional/publication tools, strive for wider adoption of vision, acceptance and adaptation to change, long term vision and strategy.

Protective - avoid, fear, defeat, control

Reactive - respond, guided, follow

Another interesting feature that becomes more obvious due to the diagrammatic display is the link between partnership and engagement, especially in relation to creativity. While partnership is defined as 'inspired' with some form of catalyst whether an ambition, vision or environmental inspiration pushing the process in a certain direction it progresses further at the stakeholder engagement level which is described as 'innovative' due to a willingness to create new ways of working, tailor-made to each situation yet striving to achieve good practice. These examples are much removed from the 'reactive' nature of stakeholder management where decision-making processes, and the stakeholders within them, follow and are guided by existing systems and structures. This suggests a shift from the structured, traditional, unimaginative techniques associated with stakeholder management to the innovative measures pushing towards new methods of working of stakeholder engagement.

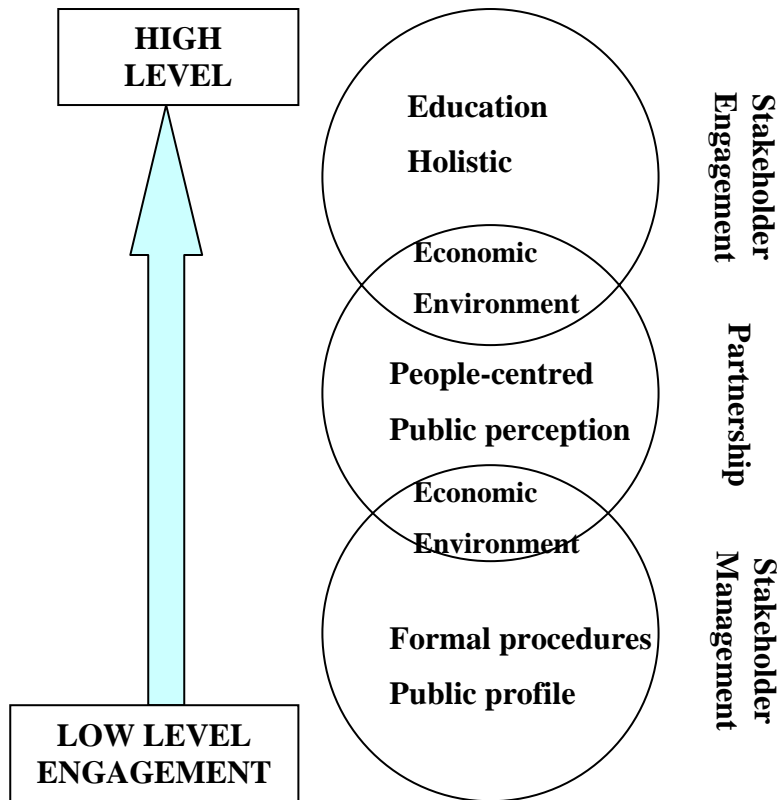
Diagram 3 presents the themes associated with each level of engagement with clearly identified areas of overlap most notably economic and environmental themes. The definitions for each of these themes are provided under diagram 3, with clearly labelled interpretations for common themes, such as 'environment', according to the type of approach whether stakeholder management, partnership or engagement. The two common themes will be considered first, followed by a discussion of the unique features.

All three levels of engagement were found to feature economic motivations, concerns or actions, as such the economic theme is viewed as an area of overlap, however, to more fully understand the nature of this theme the three individual definitions must be considered. The economic theme shared by stakeholder management and partnership is characterised by the commercial viability of the project and a responsibility to meet costs and to some extent return value however whereas the stakeholder management examples were characterised by the possibility of financial incentives, partnership was defined by a wish to secure long term funding and local economic benefits which is much more closely related to the features of stakeholder engagement which also strove to create local opportunities for economic investment and employment. This can be summarised as a shift from individual economic gain through concerns for site viability to creation of wider economic benefits into the long term.

The environment was found to be a second shared theme of all three stages with stakeholder management and partnership viewing it as a driver or constraint with concern for both environmental improvement and impact. The definition of 'environment' according to partnership findings, and also shared by stakeholder engagement, goes a step further with protection and enhancement of habitats and wildlife and long term sustainability being a clearly identified aim. The stakeholder engagement definition interprets physical features as an opportunity and places environmental enhancement and protection within a wider landscape vision. In the case of 'environment' as a theme there is a clear thread running through the length of the continuum in relation to environmental improvement and protection with higher levels of engagement also considering issues of sustainability and a wider landscape vision. The environment - whether in terms of the popularity of nature conservation end use or stakeholder concerns for habitat protection - is a shared theme creating a common aim amongst the players within the decision-making process.

Although there are clearly two themes (economic and environment) which cross the boundaries between the varying levels of engagement, the remaining six themes are apparently unique therefore these themes will be considered with a view to extracting any trends or patterns. Firstly the reiteration of a theme, 'formal procedures', first introduced in relation to key terms, strongly suggests that it is a defining feature of stakeholder management where legislation, regulations and strategies are followed whereas a more creative approach to decision making and stakeholder involvement was found at higher levels of engagement.

**Diagram 3: Framework 2 – Common and Divergent Themes**



**Framework 2: Definition of themes**

Economic (Stakeholder Management) factors include financial gain, viability, incentives and responsibilities.

Economic (Partnership) features include acquiring a commodity, meeting costs, site viability, commercial activity, long term funding and some element of return value and local economic benefits.

Economic (Stakeholder Engagement) issues were found to include a drive to create local opportunities for economic investment and employment, secure funding for the long term and generate income from new activities.

Education was found to be a key area of concern both within the main partnership through a willingness to learn from past mistakes and listen to policy guidance; and extended outwards to external stakeholder groups in terms of developing educational resources, increasing the level of understanding between stakeholders and creating a broader perspective amongst stakeholders.

Environment (Stakeholder Management) as a driver or constraint, concern for environmental improvement and impact.

Environment (Partnership) was found to act as a driver, aim or a constraint, with concern for local environmental improvement and impact, protection and enhancement of habitats and wildlife and long term sustainability.

Environment (Stakeholder Engagement) in terms of physical features was considered as an opportunity with actions demonstrating protection and enhancement of the local landscape including nature conservation and biodiversity, as part of a wider landscape vision.

Formal procedures relate to legislation, regulations, monitoring and strategies.

Holistic concerns are demonstrated in a number of areas including the long term vision for land use change, the broad context of the strategy, the pursuit of common objectives, balance of competing interests plus the concern to produce environmental, economic and social benefits and the principles of sustainable development underlying the strategy. Also found in the methods used to encourage an inclusive and integrated to decision making.

People-centred refers to a willingness to meet perceived needs, provide access for a wide range of people and provision of social benefits including education and leisure.

Public perception relates to a desire to alter public perception, enhance local image, increase national profile, improve reputation and become an example of good practice.

Public profile – concern with site promotion, image and reputation, local benefits and accessibility.

The first series of themes which appear to shift in approach from low to high levels of engagement relates to attitudes to the public. Relations with the public are an important theme as the *“Public [are] still prejudiced against coal industry...”* (Land Rehabilitation Manager, UK Coal) and *“People are very suspicious...”* (Senior Environmental Designer, Broxtowe Borough Council). This attitude is attributed to past reputation by the Divisional Restoration Manager (Lafarge Aggregates) as he stated that *“...companies 30 years ago were seen as very bad and were very bad generally speaking...”*. This belief and subsequent negative attitude can be tackled in a number of ways. A stakeholder management approach is likely to be limited to site promotion and stakeholder (landowner, private developer) image and reputation which is likely to explain the additional features of local benefits and accessibility. Partnership shares some of these concerns yet shifts from a stance of protection and fear towards a desire to change attitudes for example altering public perception and enhancing local image, reputation and national profile by becoming an example of good practice (this people-centred approach is observed throughout the partnership decision-making process). Moving further up the scale from public profile to public perception to the high engagement end of the continuum there is a shift in approach from attempts to persuade the public to alter their opinion towards education of external stakeholders. As such, stakeholder engagement was found to be characterised by a wish to increase the level of understanding between stakeholders and create a broader perspective amongst stakeholders. Within both the partnership and stakeholder engagement characteristics there was a willingness to develop educational resources.

The final theme to be highlighted is ‘holistic’, a feature of stakeholder engagement defined as incorporating a long-term vision, pursuit of common objectives and encouragement of an inclusive and integrated approach to decision making. Although in this format the theme is unique to this particular approach, some of the features within it are demonstrated to some extent by partnership; for example a concern for sustainable development and social benefits. Considering the single focus of stakeholder management compared to the wider concerns and benefits of partnership, the holistic nature of engagement seems the next logical step.

## **Summary – Framework Two**

The second framework defined the differences and similarities between low, mid and high levels of engagement through the identification of terms and themes. Whereas low levels of engagement were defined as reactive and insular, high levels were found to be inclusive and proactive, with the popular option of partnership described as open-minded and adaptive. The key terms were found to describe a process that evolves from low to higher levels of engagement. Although the words demonstrate a change from ‘reactive’ to ‘proactive’ the actual point of change is more difficult to chronicle. This was illustrated by using a Venn diagram to demonstrate the overlap between levels and the opportunity to progress higher up the scale. This evolution is clearly shown in the themes representative of the stages where two themes in particular (economic and environment) show changes in attitude and outlook from the stakeholder management approach of financial gain and environmental constraints to that of engagement with a wider economic and environmental agenda of investment, long term funding and landscape vision.

It can thus be said that the partnership stage is a zone of transition as well as contentment as it is the stage where a reactive approach shifts into proactive, where narrow focuses begin to become broader. Given the aspirations of those involved, most commonly towards partnership, this suggests that this stage on the continuum represents a choice. Although it can confidently be stated that no stakeholder wished to slip back down the scale towards lower levels of engagement, this common and acceptable level of engagement allows stakeholders to choose whether simply to maintain a partnership approach or to progress to

higher levels of engagement. Although it can be understood why once they have enjoyed the positive nature and successful outcomes associated with partnerships stakeholders do not want to experience the difficulties of lower levels of engagement it is perhaps more difficult to convey why they might want to do more, why they should choose to push towards higher levels of engagement.

### **Framework three: Stakeholder hierarchy and interaction**

During the analysis of the primary research it has become apparent that the case studies as a whole were not always easily placed on the continuum as they demonstrated some characteristics from more than one level of engagement. This in part is because real life rarely fits neatly into boxes but also because there are often different relationships between stakeholders within any one site, and over a period of time, with some players having higher levels of engagement between them than with other groups. Framework three was thus created in consideration of the fact that interaction between individual stakeholders or groups can influence the level of engagement on any single site with more than one stage on the continuum being present within a decision-making process. The framework also considers the presence of a hierarchy of stakeholder groups.

Framework three consists of two interrelated issues, stakeholder hierarchy and stakeholder interaction. Each issue was used to create a diagram which, when considered together, explain how stakeholders operate within the overarching decision-making process. For example, a case study site may be labelled as following a stakeholder management route yet within this decision-making process there may be some stakeholders who interact in a manner that is akin to partnership.

Initial findings were used to develop the notion of primary and secondary stakeholders within the decision-making process (Curzon, 2003). Primary stakeholders, for example mineral companies, were then defined as having a direct influence on the decision-making process, whereas secondary stakeholders, such as environmental groups, were found to be outside the decision-making process and therefore reliant on acting through other more powerful stakeholders in order to get their voice heard. However, the category of tertiary has subsequently been added as it was felt that the original two groupings did not go far enough in adequately explaining how stakeholders are ranked in terms of level of influence on the decision-making process and therefore their relative importance, not just in their ability to influence the decision-making process but also in relation to each other which also has a bearing on the interactions between groups. In particular, although there are many similarities between the initial definition of primary stakeholders with the groups initially identified as belonging to this category remaining within it (Local Authority, landowner and mineral company), the secondary category was found to be more complex than originally realised. The rather simplistic division into primary and secondary groupings did not adequately represent the variety of types of stakeholders likely to be involved in any decision-making process in particular, and with further analysis it became increasingly obvious that there were stakeholder groups within the broad category of secondary that were very different in nature.

The existence of three types of stakeholder grouping, the levels of influence and involvement of each category from primary through to tertiary has led to the creation of a diagram that portrays this hierarchy. A triangle diagram was particularly chosen as it suggests that a power and dominance structure exists within the decision-making process and more specifically between the groups involved. The first diagram associated with framework three is displayed below, followed by an explanation.

**Diagram 4**  
**Framework 3: Stakeholder Hierarchy**

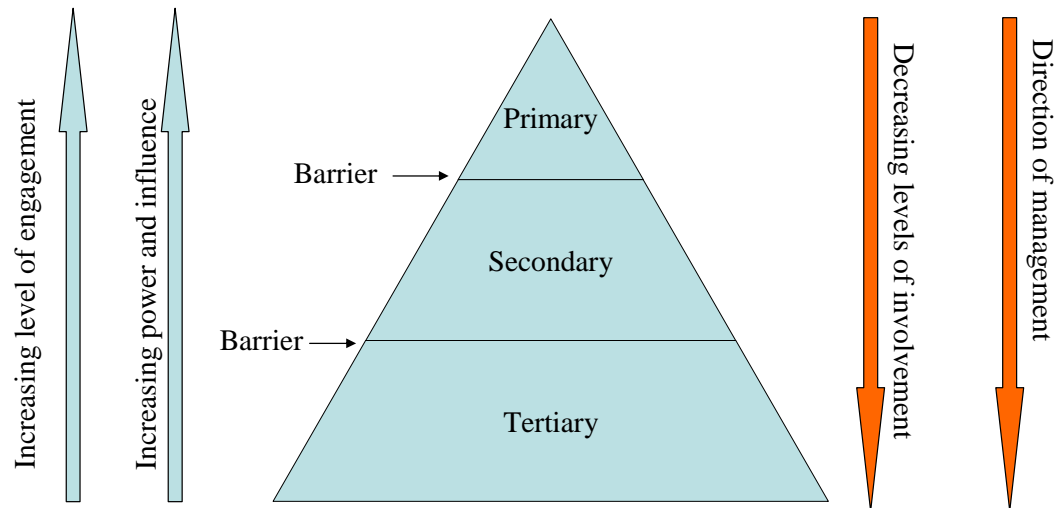


Diagram 4 collates and displays a range of information relating to the potential hierarchy between stakeholders in any given site. The central aspect of the diagram with its triangular shape not only underlines the greater importance of the primary stakeholders compared to those beneath it but is also suggestive of the fact that there are far more tertiary stakeholders than primary stakeholders. For example, whereas a site may have only two or three primary stakeholders (local authority, mineral company and landowner), there are likely to be more secondary stakeholders including a number of statutory consultees, plus any investors or site managers, in addition there may be a wide range of small, local groups who would all be classified as tertiary stakeholders. The arrows on either side of the central section of the diagram summarise levels of involvement and influence with an overall increase in engagement, power and influence associated with those groups higher up the hierarchy whereas moving from the top down, levels of involvement were found to decrease. Management of stakeholder groups was also found to operate in a top-down manner, this will be discussed further and illustrated diagrammatically, in the section on stakeholder interaction in the final part of this paper.

Finally, it should be noted that labels suggesting a barrier exists between the levels have been placed on the diagram. This is to flag up the issue that there are differences in characteristics between each of the groups and therefore not only represents the divisions and differences between primary, secondary and tertiary groups but also the difficulties of moving between categories. For example a stakeholder group moving from the tertiary category into the secondary category or from secondary to primary is difficult as not only must they possess certain characteristics such as the ability to influence decision making, but they are also restricted by the management and interactions between the three groupings themselves for example, primary stakeholders can control lower level groups through restricting their involvement in the decision-making process.

The second element of framework three relates to stakeholder interaction focussing specifically on the relationships between and within the groupings introduced above in the hierarchy of stakeholders. Whereas frameworks one and two have centred on the decision making continuum in terms of the characteristics, outcomes, themes and key words associated with the decision making styles from management through partnership to engagement, this framework is concerned with the stakeholder interactions within any one of those larger decision-making processes. Put simply, this framework and the supporting diagram explain and illustrate how stakeholders fit together within the larger decision-making process which is concerned with land use.

This research has aimed to determine the reality of the decision-making process surrounding land use change and thus it was not entirely unexpected that the real case study sites did not fit neatly into all aspects of the first two frameworks. However, what has arisen from this is the realisation that there is a second decision-making process and further layers of interaction within the larger land use decision-making process. Framework three focuses on stakeholder type (primary, secondary and tertiary) in a more generic context in that the interactions between and within these groups was true of all sites whatever the overall decision-making process was labelled. Diagram 5 illustrates the relationships between the three stakeholder types and also the interaction within each of these groupings.

**Diagram 5**  
**Framework 3: Stakeholder Interaction**

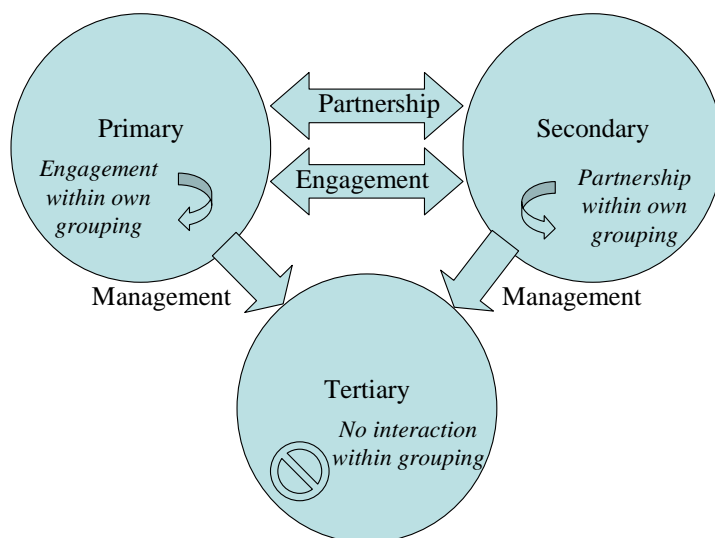


Diagram 5 deals with two areas of stakeholder interaction, namely relations within any one stakeholder group for example how primary stakeholders relate to other primary stakeholders and also relationships between groups for example how secondary and tertiary stakeholders interrelate. Relationships within stakeholder groups were found to vary across the three different groupings with primary stakeholders engaging with other primary stakeholders and secondary stakeholders commonly having partnerships whether (formal or informal) with other secondary stakeholders. For example, relations between mineral companies were variously described as having a “...degree of friendly competition...” (Ecologist, Staffordshire County Council) and “friendly banter” (Senior Estates Surveyor (Midlands

Region), Aggregate Industries) with “*a great deal of interest in shared knowledge...no sort of overt antagonism...the industry’s fairly open these days*” (Estates Department, RMC Aggregates).

The above illustration of the poor interaction between primary and tertiary stakeholder groups is supported by comments in the literature. Webb *et al* (2008) comment that most consultations involve only small numbers of ‘usual suspects’ who are already engaged with the issues and rarely represent the broader community. They believe that a wider range of community stakeholders must be involved to achieve true engagement. They do acknowledge that such engagement is hard to achieve. Maak (2007) also underlines the difficulties of reaching lower level stakeholders. He asserts that for businesses to act responsibly they must create ‘networks of relationships’ with individuals or groups that are typically unconnected. Such behaviour can contribute to sustainable outcomes and ‘the common good’. In relation to this it is interesting to note that PPS1: Delivering Sustainable Development (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2005), clearly states a need to deliver ‘*effective community involvement*’ (p.18) yet goes on to state that Local Authorities should ‘tell’ communities about emerging policies and proposals, ‘consult’ on formal proposals and ‘seek’ feedback. Disappointingly, none of these words are reflective of a high level of engagement. All are closely in line with the top-down relationship set out in diagrams 4 and 5.

Relationships between the three stakeholder groups were found to follow a similar trend to that identified in the within-group relations in that primary and secondary groups were noticeably different in their interaction to that of tertiary stakeholders. This suggests that there may be fewer similarities and common agendas and more obstacles or differences to overcome between tertiary and any other group than there is between primary and secondary stakeholders. As portrayed on the diagram, evidence was found of both engagement and partnerships between primary and secondary stakeholders, and further details of this process can be found in the themes and terms which form framework two. It should also be noted that the two-headed arrows between the primary and secondary stakeholders in diagram 5 underline the two-way relationship which frequently exists between these groups.

Conversely, the relationship between primary and secondary stakeholders and the tertiary grouping is notoriously one way, more specifically a top-down stakeholder management approach. The previously discussed characteristics and the frameworks imply that the process is likely to include negotiation but to be protective and reactive rather than the higher levels of engagement enjoyed by the primary and secondary stakeholders which were of a proactive and inclusive nature. In fact, some of the comments from primary stakeholders about the tertiary group were less than complimentary, for example, “*some of the locals can be really, really pedantic if they want to*” (Planning Technician, Wiltshire County Council) and “[Local Action Groups] *often have NIMBY syndrome, armchair politics and little understanding of the real world. They’re not prepared to listen...*” (Director of Moreton C. Cullimore (Gravels) Ltd). Building a partnership or any sort of higher-level engagement would be extremely difficult given feelings such as these.

### **Summary – Framework Three**

Whilst it is widely believed that “*people should have a say in issues affecting their lives*” (p.30) creating realistic means of resolving conflict and integrating diverse viewpoints is much more difficult (Stoll-Kleemann and Welp, 2006). The last framework maps the current process and highlights areas of difficulty and potential conflict.

Framework three consisted of two elements – stakeholder hierarchy and the interaction between the different stakeholder groups. Three clear groups of stakeholders were identified during the research and analysis, namely, primary, secondary and tertiary. Whereas primary stakeholders had the ability to directly influence decision making, secondary

stakeholders were found to become involved in decision making after major decisions had been made (although they were actively involved in site management and project design) with tertiary groups not having any direct influence on decisions and resorting to acting through higher level stakeholders to get their concerns heard. However, although the research found that three distinct groups existed whether such labelling is useful in a real life context is debatable. Much literature appears to delight in labelling stakeholders according to influence, power, role etc yet labelling in itself may cause barriers between stakeholders. Refreshingly McVea and Freeman (2005) challenge the overemphasis of roles in stakeholder theory. They argue that by adopting a view of stakeholders as ‘real people with names and faces’, an understanding of how collections of often very different individuals can work together to create a beneficial outcome for all those affected by company actions.

### **Transferability – fitting into the bigger picture**

From the examination of the decision-making process surrounding land use change, many issues can be further understood about the land-using industry, about relations between multiple stakeholder groups, about why it is desirable to do more than ‘manage’ stakeholders and about questioning the suitability of standard consultation mechanisms and the traditional planning system in a changing social and environmental context. Overall, for long term success to be achieved, and for a positive experience to be possible, the decision-making process (whether in a site, organisation, region, or at a national scale) needs to be proactive and tailored to reflect these changing needs and relationships and to take advantage of the opportunities offered.

The research findings, and therefore the main thrust of the work, is defined by *change*; change in land use, changing environments, the effect of changing landscapes on people, and changing attitudes and agendas. The reality of stakeholder engagement identified in the research found a ‘zone of contentment’. The resultant challenge for others is to push away from this zone towards better modes of engagement with outcomes more in keeping with contemporary agendas.

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