STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNITY CONSULTATION
MAJOR INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENERGY PROJECTS
RSK’S COMBINED CONSULTATION AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC APPROACH

PROPORTIONATE COMMUNITY INVESTMENT

There are numerous benefits from integrating the stakeholder engagement and socio-economic processes:

■ Both teams work together to record all the issues and concerns raised by statutory, non-statutory and community consultees, and can ascertain any issues the client has an obligation to address.

■ Input from the socio-economic team can be used to inform the development of a community consultation scheme.

■ RSK can deliver a communication strategy that directly addresses people’s concerns and questions during the impact assessment phase.

■ The stakeholder engagement process can improve the robustness of the socio-economic assessment, which is often considered inadequate by consultees, as there are no definitive regulations to guide it.

■ RSK’s cohesive approach can pay dividends when it comes to matters of community investment and community benefit funds.

The diagram overleaf shows the workflows of the stakeholder engagement and socio-economic processes workflows, and how they align.

“THE WORK OF RSK GROUP HAS ALWAYS BEEN OF THE HIGHEST STANDARD AND PIVOTAL IN SECURING CONSENT FOR A NUMBER OF SCHEMES. I HAVE NO HESITATION IN RECOMMENDING THEM TO OTHER PROJECT DEVELOPERS.”

PETER TRUSSLER, PROJECT DIRECTOR, WELSH POWER GROUP
PROJECT SUPPORT FROM FEASIBILITY SCREENING TO OPERATION

RSK CAN CONDUCT THE ENTIRE STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PROCESS, FROM FEASIBILITY, SITING AND DESIGN THROUGH TO ENSURING THAT PRACTICAL AND COST-EFFECTIVE MITIGATION MEASURES ARE BUILT INTO THE COMMITMENTS REGISTER OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT AND DELIVERED DURING CONSTRUCTION AND OPERATION.

We can help you to demonstrate that you have listened and reacted to people’s concerns, which, ultimately, will help you to avoid unnecessary conflict and delay.

We work closely with the client’s public affairs department or consultant on all third-party consultation, and with the commercial department on determining appropriate levels for the community benefits package.

Our services cover the statutory process from start to finish.

STAGE ONE:
ADVERTISING THE STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY CONSULTATION
- Publicising the application
- Defining the consultation zone
- Rationalising the defined consultation zone

STAGE TWO:
IDENTIFYING HOUSEHOLDS AND BUSINESSES WITHIN THE CONSULTATION ZONE, AND GROUPS WHO MAY HAVE AN INTEREST IN THE DEVELOPMENT OR ITS POTENTIAL IMPACTS
- Developing and implementing a range of consultation techniques
- Consulting with statutory and non-statutory bodies, and the general public

STAGE THREE:
PROVIDING CONSULTEES WITH A CLEAR IMPACT ASSESSMENT DOCUMENT
- Submitting a consultation report of responses to regulator/planning authority
- Submitting a consultation report to the local community
- Advertising acceptance of application

AT A GLANCE
Seamless integration of consultation and socio-economic assessment will
- reduce the potential for conflict and delay
- deliver your legal obligations with respect to consultation
- show that you have listened and responded to stakeholder concerns.
Effective stakeholder engagement and community consultation help to preserve your reputation, minimise risk and win consent for major projects in the energy, transport, waste and property sectors.

RSK provides integrated programmes during the EIA/consenting phases for a number of clients across a broad range of industry sectors including energy. Our provision of strategic advice and practical support to the client team includes:

- Identifying stakeholders: identifying and managing the engagement of all key external stakeholders affected by a project and to act as the point of contact for external stakeholders. At this stage our socio-economic specialists would identify individuals and groups potentially impacted by the proposed development.

- Developing a communications strategy and key messages: developing appropriate statutory and community relations strategies tailored to the scale, sensitivity, significance to the business, community impact and potential media or political interest for the project. The strategy and key messages will be derived, in part, from the initial EIA scoping opinion and other informal comments from statutory consultees, with the socio-economic assessment having a major input.

- Managing risk: proactively advising on any community relations risks to a project and putting in place appropriate mitigating actions to manage these risks. Mitigating actions agreed with the client would be aimed at minimising negative impact in environmental, social and economic terms.

- Stakeholder data management: specialist software tools including secure extranet/GIS/stakeholder database, which can be used to streamline data management and programming.

- Community investment: responsibility for seeking out opportunities to implement the client’s community investment policy (e.g. with local schools and community organisations).

- Event management: organising and manning public consultation related events, such as public exhibitions, community forums and stakeholder workshops.

- Production of promotional materials: production of project-related materials, such as consultation documents for the public, leaflets, newsletters, exhibition panels, videos and bespoke photography. This may include developing content for project-related websites, and for launching and managing appropriate social media tools to support stakeholder engagement.

- Managing media relations: the development of media strategies, proactively seeking opportunities for positive coverage, writing press releases, media monitoring and responding to press enquiries.

- Delivering local political engagement: responsibility for developing the engagement strategy for local authority elected members and local MPs, and managing the contacts with them when appropriate.

- Compiling consultation reports/statements of community consultation: creation of the summary documents that outline the consultation process, the feedback received and the resulting mitigations for submission in support of consents and licence applications.
Failing to identify key communities and engage them before the project is properly defined or when it is too late to react to their concerns can be severely detrimental to a project’s success. RSK develops stakeholder engagement plans that identify the interested parties and pressure groups, set out how best and when to communicate with them, and indicates how their concerns can be captured and translated into cost-effective mitigation measures.

We actively seek out those communities that otherwise may be disconnected from the process, and work out how to engage them. This may involve targeted campaigns or use of translated documents.

Our clients use RSK’s stakeholder services because we have the experience to develop effective engagement plans, support to create communication media such as websites, brochures, exhibitions, adverts and newsletters, ability to provide presentation skills coaching and key message briefings to staff representing client at public events, media relations experts to interact with the press and local politicians, technical people to answer questions at public meetings, tools, such as the community consultation database, to analyse and understand people’s concerns, experience of negotiating with the relevant authorities to agree mitigation measures that are reasonable, achievable and cost-effective, and will satisfy the stakeholders.

RSK DEVELOPS STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PLANS THAT IDENTIFY INTERESTED PARTIES AND PRESSURE GROUPS, SET OUT HOW BEST AND WHEN TO COMMUNICATE WITH THEM, AND INDICATE HOW THEIR CONCERNS CAN BE CAPTURED.

At a Glance

Proactive community engagement can

- allow project plans to proceed without unexpected delays
- satisfy your legal obligations
- demonstrate that your consultation process has been inclusive and transparent.
Developers are now obliged to offer a community benefit fund as standard practice for onshore wind farms over 5 megawatts (MW). The Community Benefit Protocol (CBP), published in 2011, set minimum requirements for the level of investment made into the community by the developer. It indicated that host communities of onshore wind farms should receive at least £1,000 per MW of wind energy installed every year for the lifetime of the project. At the start of June 2013, following a government review, RenewablesUK increased the recommended minimum level of investment five-fold, to £5,000 per MW. In addition, the Government has also prepared good practice guidance and initiated the use of a new register of community benefits, which follows a similar successful system used in Scotland.

At present, it is only an obligation for developers of onshore wind farms to provide community benefits; there is no such obligation for offshore wind farms, or indeed for onshore/offshore non-wind projects. However, there are examples of offshore projects (wind and non-wind projects), and non-wind onshore projects, which have introduced benefits to the local community. The benefits are not an obligation under any protocol, and therefore there is no quantified targets or limits on them. As a result, there are potential precedents that could be set in terms of what the community expects of the benefits being offered, which could surpasses the guidelines set in the CBP. Regulators and the community are beginning to expect consideration of community benefits by developers, but expectations must be managed to ensure that demands do not spiral.

RSK offers a service that will help manage those expectations and ensure clients are not committing to more than they need to: commitment will be proportionate and benefits appropriate.

- Developers want to be reassured that payments are proportionate and will be cost-effective. Communities want to feel they are being offered fair and worthwhile compensation. There is great potential for bad feeling and suspicion to develop because of mismatched expectations and misunderstanding of intentions. This could evolve into active opposition against the project.

- RSK ensures that reliable information is collected and meaningful stakeholder dialogue entered into, so that available funds can be matched with actual locally needed projects, and our clients’ PR is maximised.

- RSK uses an integrated approach to engagement and socio-economic assessment, utilising innovative consultation mechanisms, to achieve this.

RSK BRINGS TOGETHER COMMUNITY CONSULTATION AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC ASSESSMENT TO HELP CLIENTS DESIGN AND IMPLEMENT PROPORTIONATE AND APPROPRIATE COMMUNITY INVESTMENT PROGRAMMES, WHICH ALIGN WITH REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS. RSK CAN APPLY THIS TO ALL PROJECT TYPES, AND AT ALL SCALES.

DRIVERS FOR COMMUNITY INVESTMENT

ENSURING PROPORTIONATE COMMUNITY INVESTMENT

AT A GLANCE

- Minimum obligations on community benefit offerings for onshore wind farms
- No obligation for offshore wind farms
- Expectations must be managed to ensure clients only commit to proportionate and appropriate benefits
ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS, GETTING HELPSFUL ANSWERS AND ENGAGING WIDELY

WHEN CONSULTING WITH STAKEHOLDERS, DEVELOPERS ARE OFTEN FACED WITH DILEMMAS ON WHEN TO RELEASE INFORMATION, AND HOW TO ENSURE THAT CONSULTATION IS ROBUST.

RSK can help advise on managing the information flows. For example, at what point might the potential options or alternatives be shared, knowing that early release may have an impact on the final outcome in terms of practicality, feasibility, economics and sustainability, or raise other issues of concern.

Asking open questions represents true consultation, although the often unstructured nature of the answers makes them difficult to process and, consequently, the survey population is often limited. Asking closed questions is generally easier and enables more people to be consulted but, although the answers are more easily analysed, the information gained is likely to be less revealing.

Using RSK’s Consultation database gets around this problem. This secure extranet/GIS/stakeholder tool enables large numbers of free responses to be analysed accurately and efficiently on a project-by-project basis.

Crucially, the tool facilitates widespread consultation with people who can respond in their own words to help you get a good understanding of what the community really thinks.

The database extracts key themes from free text using complex statistical analysis and relates them to geographical information. The source text can be from website forums, blogs, emails, phone text messages or automatically converted voice messages. The comments are grouped around the themes, and are accessed via an interactive tool, the Dashboard, that represents the data on scaleable maps, plans or satellite images. The system operates in real time and can be used to follow changes in perception resulting from consultation programmes.

AT A GLANCE

- Recording community responses accurately will allow for a robust representation of community response for planning consent purposes
- inform the statement of community consultation.
RSK has experience of driving media, political and community communication programmes for organisations involved in water, electricity and gas through to wind, biomass and tidal projects. We specialise in communicating technical issues to local authorities, MPs and regional media. By working with our regional experts, we offer a complete stakeholder engagement and community consultation service across the UK.

RSK can help you to map your stakeholder issues and identify the key drivers. It can then look at the best way of reaching the right people at the right level through

- parliamentary and local authority lobbying and campaigns to drive issues and help present you as a thought leader and trusted adviser to opinion formers and decision makers
- political public relations – more than 25 years’ journalistic experience helps in adding press coverage to the public affairs mix
- contact programmes that build on your organisation’s stakeholder relationship or that start from scratch to ensure your key messages reach the heart of the decision-making process
- coalition building and profile raising to help build a common platform of third-party allies for presenting a unified voice
- managing community relations – understanding and working with, rather than against, local communities is vital for the success of your project. We can help you to develop a dialogue with local residents, councillors, and environmental and other interest groups to ensure that they understand your project and that any community investment is appropriate and proportionate.
- political and media perception audits so that you know what your stakeholders are thinking and saying about you before you start speaking to them.

RSK WORKS WITH A REGIONAL NETWORK OF LOCAL MEDIA AND POLITICAL LOBBYISTS WHO ALL HAVE EXTENSIVE EXPERIENCE WORKING IN PR AND COMMUNITY AFFAIRS.

We know that community engagement has to

- improve your chances of success
- be affordable and proportionate to your scheme
- meet policy expectations and stand up to scrutiny from councillors, MPs and the media.
PEEL ENERGY FRODSHAM WIND FARM

DELIVERING COMMUNITY CONSULTATION SUPPORT FOR THE PLANNING APPLICATION FOR A PROPOSED 20-TURBINE WIND FARM NEAR FRODSHAM, UK

Having recently gained planning consent, the Frodsham wind farm will be the second largest onshore development of its kind in England. The site on the Mersey Estuary is currently a deposit area for the Manchester Ship Canal. It is greenbelt land and a Ramsar site, a site of special scientific interest and a special protection area, all because of its extensive birdlife.

RSK, with a local media and political expert, delivered a comprehensive stakeholder engagement service. Desk-based stakeholder analysis identified key groups and individuals in the community. A traffic-light system was applied to their perceived levels of resistance to the development to identify and mitigate the risk groups. This was underpinned by an early warning system of informal, low-key feedback to shape the communication programme.

We conducted desktop research to identify potential major issues affecting Peel Energy and its parent group, and news themes and trends such as how other local wind farms were received. This research served as a foundation for the media programme.

We worked with Peel Energy to develop a series of communication materials, which were presented to the statutory stakeholders and used during the public consultation days.

We have maintained community consultation since the public exhibition through wind farm visits, a wind farm community group, newsletter updates, an education campaign and a second public exhibition to update the community on how the proposed development has been adapted following public consultation.

The development was reported in the local, regional and national media, and Peel representatives have appeared on television and regional radio to discuss the development.

AT A GLANCE

We provided the following stakeholder and community consultation services:

- stakeholder identification and mapping
- socio-economic assessment
- development and mapping of the contact mechanism for the communities
- media relations: local, regional and national
- media and political monitoring and analysis: regional and national
- public affairs support
- facilitation of the public consultations
- production of all the supporting communication materials.
PROVIDING A COMPLETE PRE-APPLICATION CONSULTATION SERVICE FOR A £600M 850-MW COMBINED-CYCLE GAS TURBINE POWER STATION NEAR THORNTON, UK

For more than five years, RSK has helped in securing planning consent for several Welsh Power developments. We became involved in the consultation programme surrounding the Wyre Power combined-cycle gas-turbine power station project in October 2008 once it had entered the pre-application phase.

Our responsibilities have included identifying and mapping all the statutory and non-statutory stakeholders; facilitating and attending meetings with regulators, project sponsors and local authorities; managing and rolling out the public consultations; and preparing all the associated communication materials.

Because of the historic public consultations in the area, initial opposition to the development came early. Once these potential opponents were identified, we began heavily targeted consultation to avoid difficulties when the application was submitted.

During the pre-application consultation, we also prepared briefing notes for the local press and contributed to an environmental education programme at a local school.

Wyre Power has a grid connection date of August 2016. Local planning has been obtained and RSK is now working with the company to obtain the Section 36 consent from the Department of Energy and Climate Change.

AT A GLANCE

We were responsible for all aspects of stakeholder engagement and community consultation, including:
- consultation strategy development
- identifying and mapping key statutory and non-statutory stakeholders
- managing the contact mechanism
- facilitating public exhibitions and workshops for statutory stakeholders
- contributing to continuing engagement through an education programme
- providing all the communication materials
- preparing a consultation report ready for planning submission.
DELIVERING A COMPLETE STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNITY CONSULTATION PROGRAMME AT GRASSMOOR LAGOONS, A HIGHLY CONTAMINATED BROWNFIELD SITE NEAR CHESTERFIELD, UK

RSK has been commissioned to remediate a highly contaminated lagoons site at Grassmoor. Integral to the contract was the management and delivery of a comprehensive stakeholder engagement and community consultation programme.

The site, which has been partly reclaimed as a country park, was once a colliery and then became a treatment site for waste effluent from a nearby coking works. It is considered to be one of the most polluted sites in Europe, and public access is prohibited to the areas where there are contaminated tar lagoons.

The site is undergoing remediation to create additional recreational green space. Before and during the planning application phase we worked with DCC to establish key aims relating to community consultation, primarily to reassure the public about concerns relating to air quality, odour and health during the remediation work.

The site, which closed in 1992, provided local employment for 40 years, and the memories of the potentially harmful substances at the site are still fresh in the minds of many in the community. Community consultation began in September 2009 and, following planning permission being granted in 2011, continues to run throughout the four-year remediation period.

Community concerns and ideas for the redesign of the remediated landscape were discussed and sought via public events and ahead of the planning submission, and during the remediation process newsletters and a regularly updated website and site boards have remained the key communication channels to convey monitoring results and project progress.

Works have required the temporary diversion of a public footpath and the creation of a new car park, requiring clear communication with the park’s many dog walkers, riders, cyclists and other recreational users. Our on-site staff maintain an open dialogue with the local community at the site boundary, and we have built a viewing platform that can safely accommodate informal site visits without the need for full PPE to be issued.

We are responsible for all aspects of stakeholder engagement and community consultation, including:

- consultation strategy development
- project branding
- identifying and mapping key statutory and non-statutory stakeholders
- setting up and managing the contact mechanism
- facilitating public exhibitions
- providing all the communication materials
- ongoing press liaison
- preparing a consultation report ready for planning submission.
DELIVERING A COMPLETE STAKEHOLDER AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMME AT BAGNALLS PIT, DURING THE REMEDIATION OF A HIGHLY CONTAMINATED BROWNFIELD SITE NEAR MAIDENHEAD, UK

The 6.33-ha site is part of a former gravel pit, which was worked up until the late 1940s before being used as an unlicensed tip for industrial waste until the 1970s. The site is surrounded on three sides by residential properties, some less than 5 m from the boundary of the former landfill. The development of the site has proved very controversial, and was delayed in the planning system for many years on account of both the nature of the contamination and the scale of the proposed development, and two public inquiries were held.

When RSK, the supervising engineer, arrived on-site in spring 2010, there was understandable bitterness about the planning decision and high levels of concern about the health and environmental implications of the site remediation within the community, as the High Court had recently ruled, in an unrelated housing development case, that Corby Borough Council was liable for allowing pregnant women to be exposed to toxic waste.

From the outset, RSK set out to proactively communicate just how the site monitoring and other measures would protect residents’ health and minimise any inconvenience as a result of the remediation. In doing so, we worked closely with Windsor and Maidenhead Royal Borough Council, the Residents Monitoring Group, local residents and other agencies, including the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service, Thames Valley Police, Environment Agency, Health Protection Agency and the local primary care trust.

Newsletters, noticeboards and websites are common communications tools for site redevelopments, but the manned drop-in centre, 24-hour hotline, monthly residents’ meetings and an open door policy on site tours have shown RSK’s extra commitment to openly sharing information before and throughout the remediation process.

The open dialogue RSK has maintained with the regulators and the community has paid dividends. By being able to voice their concerns, understand the processes involved and see the site for themselves, local residents have been reassured that the short-term inconvenience is for the long-term gain of both the community and individuals. The council, primary care trust and local media have all recognised the role of the developer and RSK in proactively engaging the community and delivering a site remediation service that is second to none.

Our community consultation work on the project won RSK the prestigious Brownfield Briefing Award for Best Public Participation in 2011.
TALK TO RSK ABOUT HOW WE CAN CONTRIBUTE TO THE SUCCESS OF YOUR PROPOSED DEVELOPMENTS

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