

# A step-by-step guide through the theory, process and practise of stakeholder engagement



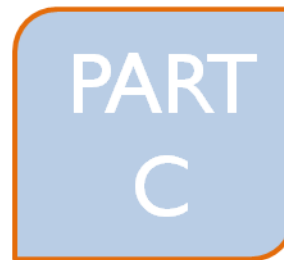
What you should know



Use what you know



Learn by doing



Choose wisely



{ ENTER GUIDE }



DURHAM  
Heritage Coast



## An overview of the elements in this stakeholder engagement guide

### What you should know

#### PART A

Structured information taking you through the theory behind stakeholder engagement. This section also includes a checklist with tips to support this approach to stakeholder engagement.

### Use what you know

#### PART B

A practical way of analysing your stakeholders. Use the template table provided and create an overview of who your stakeholders are, what they know, why they should be involved, when and how to involve them.

### Learn by doing

#### PART C

An informative practical overview is provided on the different ways you can communicate information including the likely effect your choice of communication method will have.

### Choose wisely

#### PART D

Using the right means of communication depending on who you want to reach and what you want to achieve . A number of outreach approaches are provided as an example of what you could use.



## Introduction and Table of Contents

Getting stakeholders engaged in your activities is of vital importance if you want to influence change. Influencing change can be for a variety of reasons, such as lobbying decision makers for policy change, making communities more engaged, getting views from stakeholders on certain issues or establishing networks for cooperation and sharing of ideas. Stakeholder engagement is a two-way communication process. You can learn from what your stakeholders know as much as they can from your knowledge and experience: hear and be heard.

This guide suggests ways that can bring you closer to your stakeholders. A practical hands-on exercise within this guide helps you to understand your stakeholders in order to facilitate communication with each other. Stakeholder engagement is an important element to getting the right policy in place and having the desired effect. This guide will show you the importance of knowing your stakeholders by providing a practical and hands on approach to getting and using information to influence change.

### PART A

TRUST – The  
building blocks  
of stakeholder  
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### PART C

Helping you select  
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### PART D

Visual examples of  
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## PART A

# The building blocks to stakeholder engagement



### THINK

Before you can engage with your stakeholders you need to determine:

Who they are:

- Governmental
- Institutional
- General public
- NGO

What do and don't they already know about:

- You
- Your project or initiative



### REASON

Once you know who your stakeholders are ask yourself:

Why do you want to engage with them:

- Where can they contribute
- Where could they obstruct

Why would they want to engage with you:

- What could they gain
- What could they lose



### UNDERSTAND

Having determined the Who, What and Why the next step is the How, making sure you are aware of, and understand the views, concerns and values of your stakeholders:

What has formed their opinions ?

Do they have specific or preferred agendas and aims ?



### SHARE

Different stakeholders require different forms of engagement. What works for some may not work for others.

Learn from each other by sharing knowledge and experience :

- Between you and the stakeholders
- Between the different stakeholders

Be prepared and use appropriate methods of stakeholder engagement



### TEST

Engaging with your stakeholders is a learning process and requires evaluation at different stages.

Ask for feedback so you can always provide the right information at the right time.

Evaluating what went well and what didn't is a useful exercise and will help in future planning.

*"Building trust is like sharing a story with people. Everyone needs to know the beginning, middle and end to be able to understand it."* **Project Manager, NCPMS, South West Region**

{ 'The first step in building trust is to be clear why you think 'something has to be done' and to understand whether the community and others agree that 'something has to be done' - from the EA building Trust with communities report }



# THINK

- Know who your stakeholders are - are all affected stakeholders involved?
- Know what they know- are they aware of all the issues?

A good way to make sure all stakeholders are involved is by grouping your stakeholders as a way of analysing them. Think of a logical categorisation of all the stakeholders. For instance group them by:

- **sector** (public, private, voluntary, community)
- **function** (user, service provider, regulator, landowner, decision-maker)
- **geography** (living within postal district Y, living in risk area)
- **socio-economic** (income, gender, age, length of time living in area)
- **effect** (directly affected, indirectly affected, able to affect the work/issue)
- **understanding/experience of topic X** (none, low, medium, high, more than you)
- **known or likely position** (for or against project Z)

This will help you understand what support you will need, who from and what people might need from you. It will also show the level of involvement as some may require more regular consultation than others.

**Tip:** People move on, change position or get replaced. It is worth involving more than one stakeholder from the same organisation or grouping in order not to have to start all over again with your engagement process when people leave!

## checklist

### DO

- ✓ Gather together a comprehensive, prioritised list of contacts.
- ✓ Plan how and when to communicate with them to make sure important players are not missed out.



Stakeholders come in all shapes and sizes

### DON'T

- ✓ Supply solutions before you know what they consider the issues.
- ✓ Prejudge stakeholder viewpoints, attitudes and desirable outcomes.





# REASON

REASON

Know why you want their involvement. Are you here to:

- A. Inform? - Letting your stakeholders know what you are planning/trying to accomplish.
- B. Gather information? - Gather stakeholder views to shape your planned activities/work.
- C. Involve? - Working closely with your stakeholders to create the opportunity for discussion.
- D. Form a partnership? - Influence and/or share the decision-making and responsibility with your stakeholders.
- E. Combination of the above? - In some cases you may need to use a combination of these forms of involvement or use all depending on the level of involvement you are after.

Know why they want to be involved. Find out:

- I. What they could gain? - An opportunity to influence planned activities to their advantage (e.g. Possible business opportunities)
- II. What they could lose? - A change in economic situation or perhaps their quality of life (e.g. Loss of sea view)

## checklist

### DO

- ✓ Make sure everybody understands your role in the work.
- ✓ Manage expectations by clearly communicating what is and isn't going to change as a result of the work.

Don't confuse your stakeholders



### DON'T

- ✓ Over complicate things: package your information in an appropriate way depending on type of stakeholder and their knowledge on a topic or issue.



# U UNDERSTAND

By now you will know who the stakeholders are, what they know and why and to what degree you want to engage with them. Next is the question of How?

It is important to carefully consider your stakeholder's views, concerns and values to determine appropriate means of engagement.

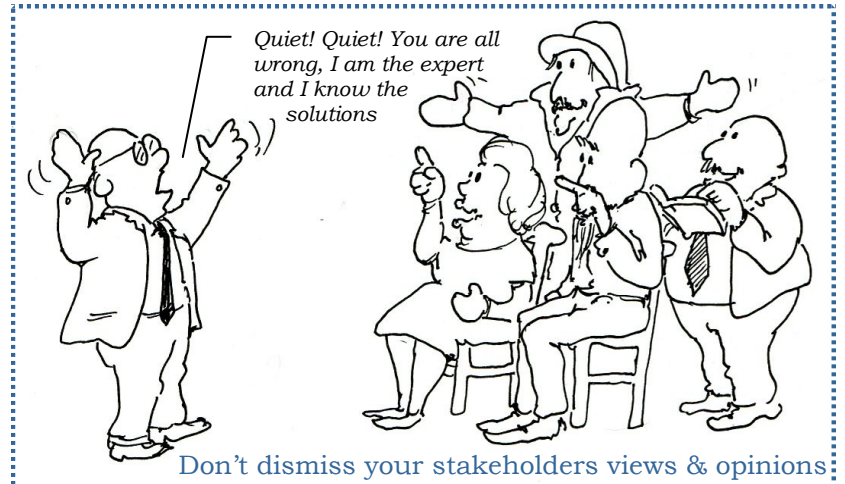
- A good way of doing this is bringing all stakeholders together for a group meeting. Depending on the number and level of stakeholders you need to involve you may need to conduct several meetings.
- It can be difficult to get certain stakeholders to commit time therefore try to plan meetings in such a way that they do not necessarily take up a whole day. Often a couple of hours followed by an informal lunch is easy for people to plan in and still gives them time to get on with their other activities.

Understanding and respecting each others views, needs and limitations is crucial in building a successful relationship with your stakeholders.

## checklist

### DO

- ✓ Take the appropriate time to get to understand your stakeholders.
- ✓ Make clear what benefit they could have by working with you.



Don't dismiss your stakeholders views & opinions

### DON'T

- ✓ Ignore concerns and values of your stakeholders.
- ✓ Dismiss any stakeholder view just because you don't understand where they are 'coming from'.

“There is a simple way to package information that, under the right circumstances, can make it irresistible. All you have to do is find it.”  
Malcolm Gladwell, *The Tipping Point* - How little things can make a big difference



# SHARE

Being open and transparent about your intentions allows for accountability and with that you will gain credibility and trust.

Different stakeholders require different forms of engagement. What works for some may not work for others. Shared information needs to be appropriate:

- A **local shop keeper** will not respond to receiving a scientific report on climate change issues. Instead a brochure explaining the project and providing examples within their work/living area may be a better way of getting their interest.

- A **councillor** will not have time to reply to a ten page questionnaire. Instead setting up a meeting to get their view and explain your motives for cooperation can have much more effect.

- An **agency** already working in the same area will not be impressed with leaflets being spread widely about your plans without them knowing. Instead involve them and ask their advice by inviting them to a meeting or workshop to explore all the things going on in the area of your interest.

## checklist

### DO

- ✓ Use different engagement approaches and types of documentation for different types of stakeholders.
- ✓ Make sure you are aware of any relevant work in the area/community.

*First impressions count. Make sure you are ready and have everything you need before you start working with the community and others.*

### DON'T

- ✓ Forget your colleagues – share your experience with colleagues/other couplets and ask them to do the same and learn from each other.
- ✓ Be biased in how you disseminate information.





# TEST

Engaging with your stakeholders is a learning process and requires evaluation at several occasions. Keep asking your stakeholders for feedback so you can always provide them with the best possible information at all times. But be careful not to overburden them.



The importance of evaluation:

Asking your self what went well and what didn't is a valuable exercise and makes planning the next event or project much easier.

Recorded interviews before and after your event/activity is a quick and easy way of measuring if opinions/views have changed and in what way.

## checklist

### DO

- ✓ Make sure you get feedback from stakeholders and then act on it.
- ✓ Keep in regular contact with stakeholders to keep momentum going.

*Keep your stakeholders involved and informed in the process and progress; earn their trust and keep checking if there are any new stakeholders that need to be involved.*

### DON'T

- ✓ Over-burden stakeholders with too regular meetings or too extensive information and documentation.
- ✓ Ignore/dismiss stakeholders if you don't get the information you were after as you may need their input again at a later stage.

## PART B

# Putting the theory into practice – going through the process

PART B of this guide provides a table as a practical exercise which you can fill in for your target area. Once the table is completed it should provide a clear and comprehensive overview of your stakeholders.

To facilitate this process you can use the theoretical information provided in PART A of the guide. In addition, there are also detailed step-by-step guidelines on the following page to further assist you (see also an example of a filled out table on page 9 of this guide).

The table should work as an ongoing process as you identify and engage with each new stakeholder while your activities progress.

### Pro-forma table:

To fill out the table below you can use PART A of this guide along with the information you have (or you can get) for your study site or area of interest to create a comprehensive overview of your stakeholders and how and when to engage with them in the best possible way. The **step-by-step guidelines** on the following page are to further assist you with filling in the table and what to do next !

Who are your stakeholders ? (list out all the stakeholders in the area of your planned activity)	Which category do they fall under ? (use a type of categorisation relevant to your area or the circumstances of your planned activity ) ( see also the THINK page in part A of this guide)	What do they know ? (ask a question in relation to your topic to determine the level of understanding there currently is on a particular topic )	Why would they want to be involved ? (try to put your self in the stakeholders position to determine their involvement wishes)	When is the best time to involve them ? ( from the start, once you have a fixed plan , half way through, towards the end or during evaluation)	What is the most effective way to involve them ? (use the communications table included in this guide to determine which means of communication would be most appropriate - more than one could be appropriate)
Depending on your area/situation you may want to slightly change/adjust the headings to make the questions more relevant to your situation/area.					

# Steps to successful stakeholder engagement

## Step 1: Identify (institutional) stakeholders

1. Search your national coastal and climate change organisations and see what offices/departments are based in your regional area and get a list of contacts.
2. Search your local councils websites for any coastal/climate change affiliated departments so you can get a list of contacts. Your county/provincial/departmental council may already have a list of contacts but it has been our experience that within councils departments are not always aware of each other or work together. Internal communication is not always present.
3. Search for coastal/climate change related projects in your area to expand the list of contacts.
4. Check the above against the participants in your workshops.

## Step 2: Organise your contacts & decide on the level of involvement

You should now have a list of contacts that span over a range of different layers of institutional stakeholders and the next step will be to approach them. Once contact is established these contacts can also point you into the direction of other relevant stakeholders that you may have overlooked. It will pay off to ask if there are any people you should have involved that you so far haven't. You will now need to decide to what degree do you want your stakeholder's involvement and depending on that how to go about approaching them.

## Step 3: What are you going to communicate & what do your stakeholders already know

Once you have decided who you want to approach and to what extent you will need to prepare your communication strategy:

1. Are you simply going to inform them on your plans?
2. Do you want to obtain information from them so they can be incorporated in your planning?
3. Do you want to incorporate your plans with already existing ones and work along with them?

Depending on the answers to the above you then choose your mode of communication (can be more than one).

**Inform:** leaflets, newsletter article, e-mail, brochure, website, letter

**Get information:** questionnaire, feed back form, phone call, interviews

**Participatory:** Workshops, surgeries, meetings & events (formal or informal depending on what people expect)  
(Also see the communication means table for further reference)

## Step 4: Working together and sharing knowledge & experience

You have now informed, gained information or have started a partnership with your stakeholders.

**Informed:** you have provided information you wanted to share in various forms (leaflets, brochures, posters, website, reports, letters etc.)

**Gained information:** you have gathered the information you need via questionnaires, workshops, meetings phone calls, e-mail exchanges etc.

**Partnership:** you have set up a partnership (can be with local agency representatives, local governments, other related projects in the area) – and will need to determine certain Terms of Reference which will clearly state each partners role, the aims of the partnership, the duration of the partnership etc. This is something you will need to do together with your partners/stakeholders.

**A project website is a useful reference and sharing point for all your outputs and the information you would like to share.**

**The following pages provide 1) an example on how to fill out the table using the North East of England couplet experience, 2) an overview of types of communication, suggestions of when to use them and what their likely effect will be and 3) visual examples of the different forms of communication.**



**This example is based on the experience of the Expert Couplet Node in the North East of England in finding ways of working together on climate change adaptation in the region. Note this is just part of the table and not complete!**

Who are your stakeholders?	Which category do they fall under ? ( Partner, Paid or unpaid stakeholder)*	What do they know in regards to climate change issues at our study site(s)?	Why would they want to be involved?	When is the best time to involve them ?	What is the most effective way to involve them ?
Environment Agency	Professional partner	Fully aware of issues	Are statutory responsible for the area	Start	Make them part of your planning process
Northumberland county councils virtual coastal group	Paid	Partially aware of issues	Are interested in the effects of climate change in the area and want to learn from outcomes for future planning	As soon as statutory agency's are on board	As soon as engagement with the statutory stakeholders is taking shape inform them of this and instigate co-operation
Fisherman in Hartlepool	Unpaid	Little or partially aware	Will be effected by any change	Once you have a clear message/request	Produce reader friendly publicity materials to inform your background/intentions, set up meetings to hear their views.
ClimateNE partnership	Paid	Fully aware of issues	Access to a network of expertise and possibility for outreach on a North West European level.	Start	Ask for their expertise and existing network and in return make them more visible to the wider IMCORE community
Northumberland Coast AONB	Paid	Partially aware of issues	Have an interest in the area	Start or soon after	Involve them in your plans & ask their advise as they know the area's ins and outs
HIP – Holy Island Partnership	Unpaid	Partially aware of issues	Could benefit (economically and experience wise) from co-operation in activities	As soon as you have planned activities so you can see how they could fit in with theirs	Work together, become part of existing activities where possible

\*Partners: Regional bodies with statutory responsibilities for example - Environment Agency, Natural England, Government office

Paid stakeholder: People in professional service - for example councillors with a coastal and/or climate change remit, NGO's

Unpaid stakeholder: Community groups - for example user groups like windsurfers, local shop keepers or NGO's

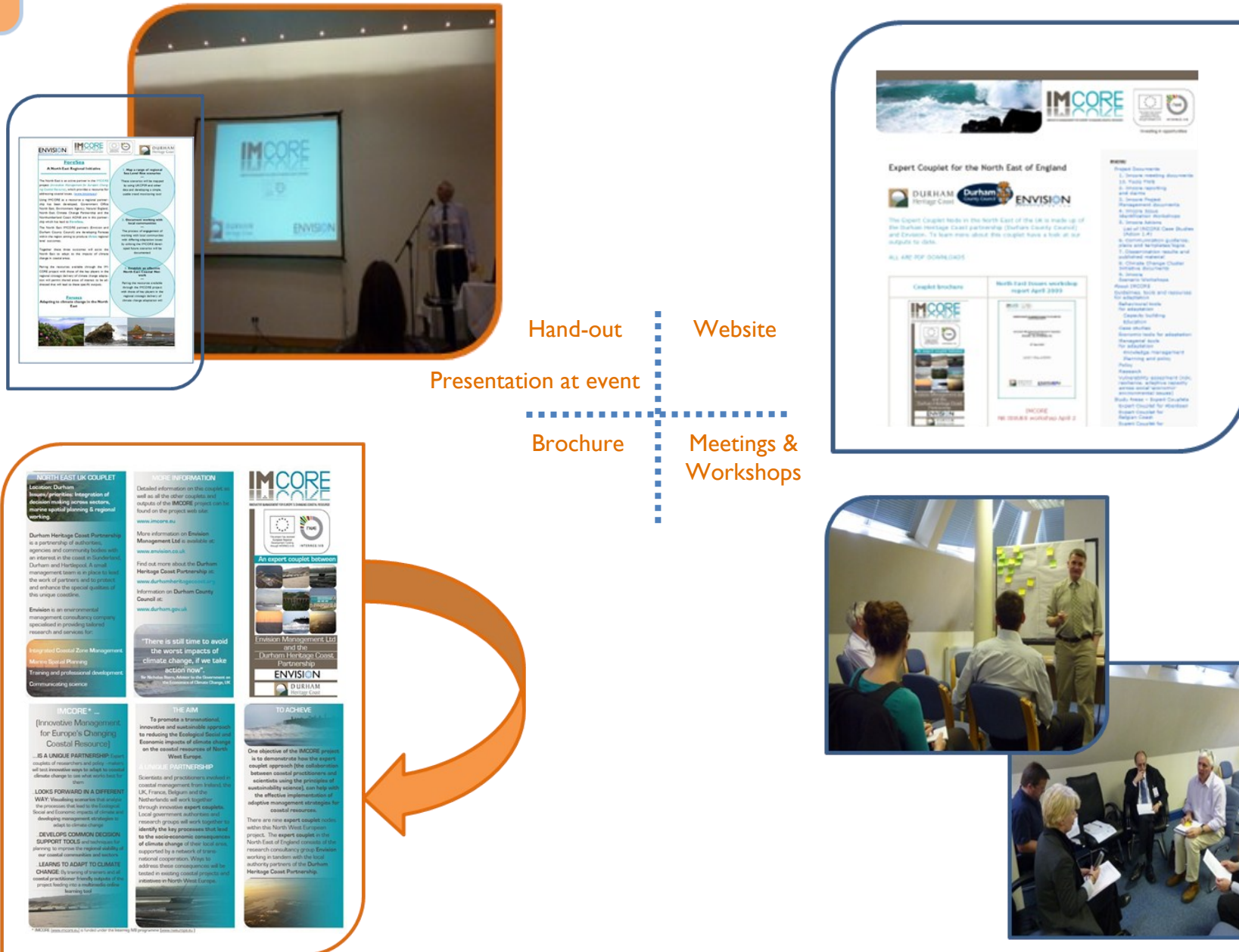


## Communicating with your stakeholders – what to use when and why?

Type of communication	When to use	Why & Likely effect/influence
Phone call	Once you have established contact a phone call may be appropriate to schedule a follow up meeting to provide more detailed information	Personal approach, can be a follow up after having provided back ground information
E-mail	A good way to elaborate a bit further on details once contact has been established	In-personal, more usable once contact is established, fast and little effort
Letter (hard copy)	A formal way to introduce yourself, where you are coming from and your interest in establishing contact.	Official, shows a level of importance
Brochure/Leaflet/Factsheet	Can be used on its own at meetings, workshops and events or as an attachment to letter or e-mail	Can inform and enthuse people.
Report	A way of keeping momentum after having had a meeting or workshop., or use as a draft version with request for comments	Gives people ownership and a feeling of being part of the process.
Meetings, Workshops & Events	If you want to bring together different stakeholder groups, if you want to inform a large group, if you want feedback from a wider audience	Being part of larger group, establish personal contacts, reach a large and diverse audience at once. Make workshops fun and interactive – this will encourage participation.
Piggy back on existing meetings./events/workshops.	Keep an eye out for local/regional events that would be appropriate-get on e-mail list of regional/local events if possible	Already have an audience, low cost/little effort, new possible stakeholders/contacts to gain
Banner	At any event	Good way to become visible/recognisable
Questionnaire	Before, at or after an event/meeting	Can provide further information on stakeholders views.
Newsletter	You could produce your own newsletter if you have the resources for this or perhaps there is already a newsletter within your institution, local council or region that you could use to publish events, articles etc.	High effort & costs. Using existing networks is a good way to get your messages across, depending on your region - instead of being yet another newsletter becoming part of an existing network not only adds value it also cost/effort effective. If there is nothing like this within your region then you can use this as a way to draw others in.
Website	Always- can be a point of reference in all communications, this can be the one place where you can keep a record of all forms of communication that have been an output ( e.g. reports, brochures, newsletters etc.). Having the website available after the project ends can be a way of self promotion on the work that has been carried out. Note: Ensure all stakeholders have internet access!	Website already exists, your page already exists, a way to see what others are doing and showing others what you do. A reference point for any stakeholder and a place to maintain all your activities and outputs.

# PART D

## Choose the right method of communicating with your stakeholders - Some examples



## Choose the right method of communicating with your stakeholders - Some examples



Display of materials  
at event



Banners

Factsheet



## Acknowledgements, references and further information sources

This guide has been produced as part of the Innovative Management for Europe's Changing Coastal Resources (IMCORE) Interreg IVB project and is based on the experience of the Expert Couplet Node in the North East of England - CTL Consult Ltd and the Durham Heritage Coast – in setting up a regional partnership resulting in the ForeSea initiative – A North East Coastal Initiative.

The Environment Agency (2004) Building Trust With Communities: a Background Report for Environment Agency Staff - part of the EA's Building Trust with Communities (BTwC) project - has been used as a resource for parts of the theoretical elements and some of the quotes in PART A of this guide. To view the full report: click [here](#).

Author(s): Hester Whyte, Martin Le Tissier & Jeremy Hills (2011, CTL Consult Ltd, UK). Contributions have been made by IMCORE project partners - [www.imcore.eu](http://www.imcore.eu)

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Suggested resources and more information on stakeholder engagement:

- CAPE - Community Adaptation Planning and Engagement (CAPE) on the Coast
- Improving community and citizen engagement in flood risk management decision making, delivery and flood response

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