Urban Woodland Design

Engaging with the Community

This section of the course covers:

- Community engagement
  - Why?
  - Who?
  - How?
- Ensuring a successful project
- Exercise with feedback

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What is to be gained?

Begin by thinking about why one might want to engage with the community.

What is to be gained?

- To find out what people think about the site, their perceptions of it and its future
- To establish how a site is currently used
- To identify problems with the woodland
- To increase local awareness and stewardship
- To build good relationships

What is to be gained?

- To increase use of the woodland, enhancing safety and maximising community benefits
- To motivate the participation of related community stakeholders
- To help manage change
- To achieve the support of local people for a new initiative (or for protection of site if under threat)
- To reduce anti-social behaviour

Who constitutes 'the community'?

Appreciating 'why' to engage will help one identify 'who' to engage – who is 'the community'?
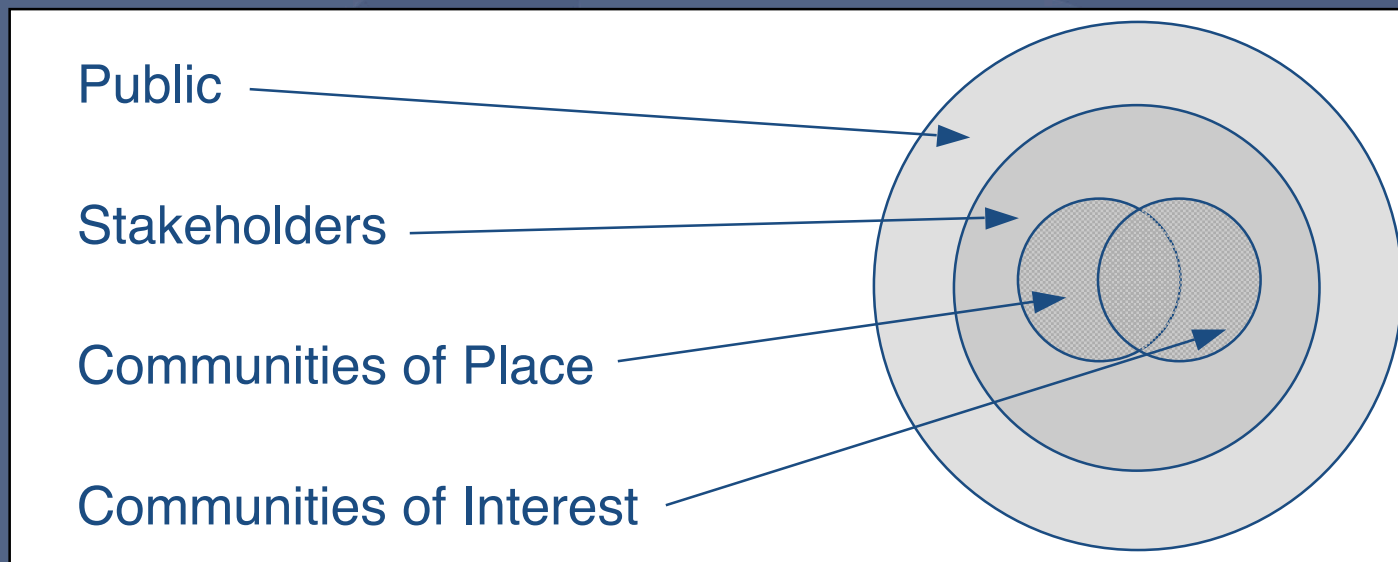
Who?

'Public' 'Stakeholder' 'Community'
These terms are often used as if they are interchangable, yet they have distinct definitions, as this diagram illustrates:

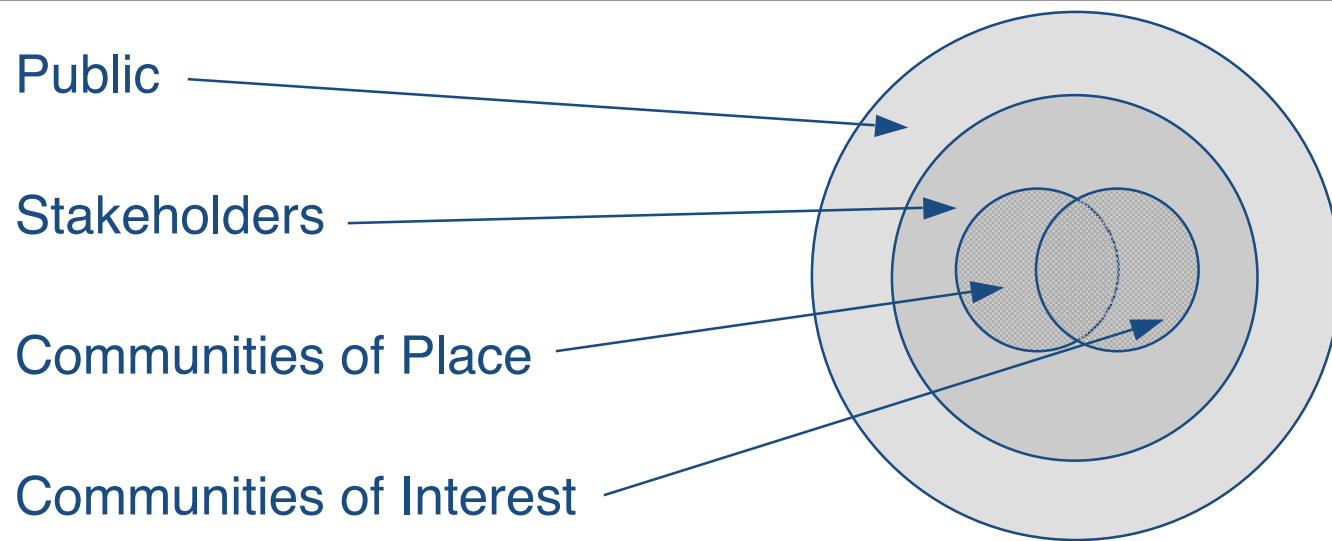Forestry Commission
Scotland

Who?

'Public' 'Stakeholder' 'Community'
These terms are often used as if they are interchangable, yet they have distinct definitions, as this diagram illustrates:

Public

Stakeholders

Communities of Place

Communities of Interest

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Who?

Stakeholders can be thought of as a subset of the general public, and a community as a subset of all the stakeholders.

Public

Stakeholders

Communities of Place

Communities of Interest
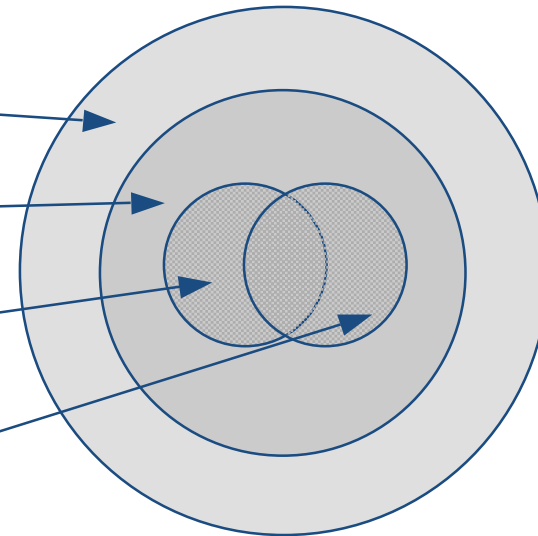
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Who?

Communities can relate to a place,
or might share common interests or origins.
These communities might overlap.

Public

Stakeholders

Communities of Place

Communities of Interest

Who should be involved in decision making?

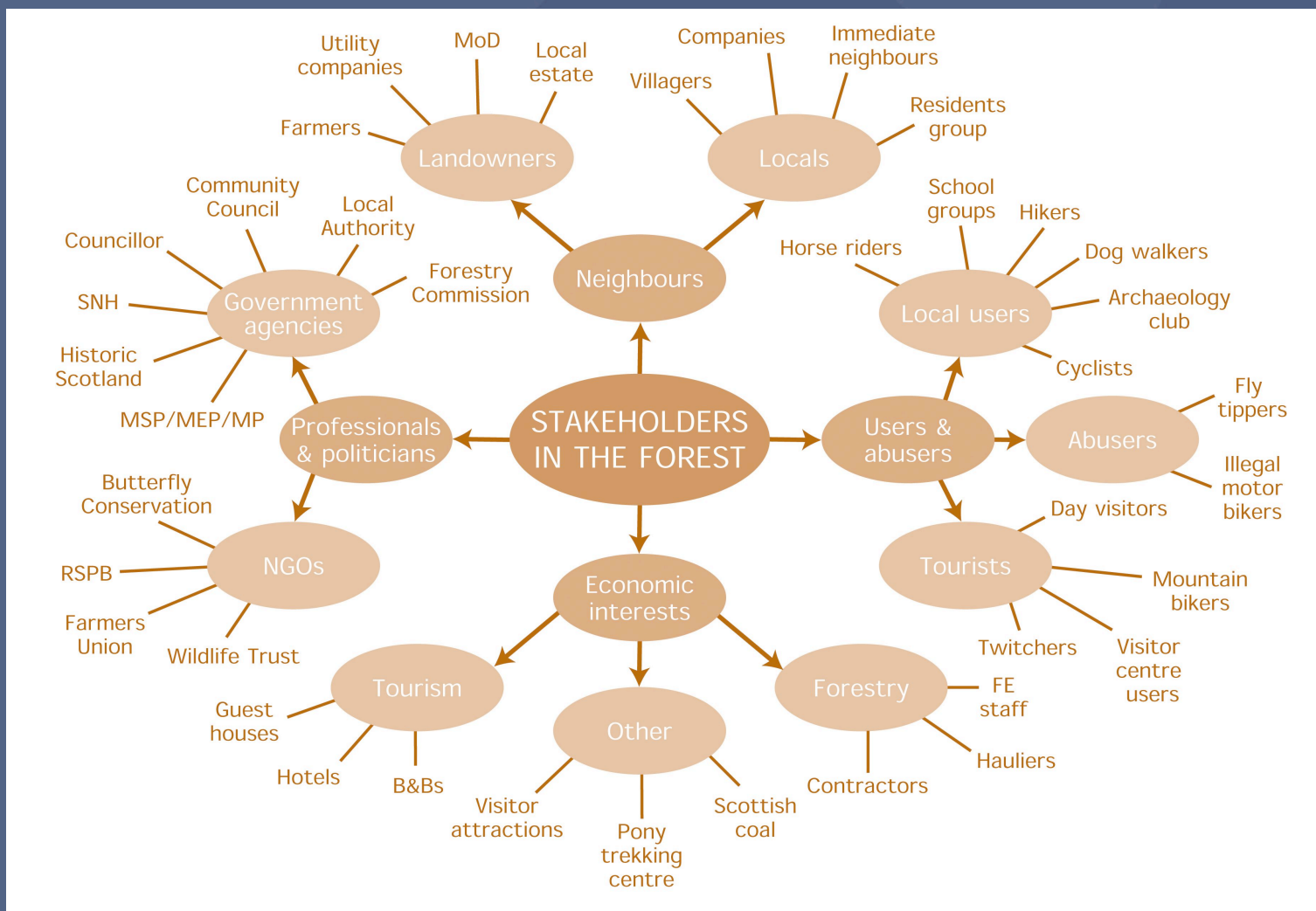It is not practical to involve the entire public.

The most relevant stakeholders need to be identified.

These could be individuals, representatives of groups, whole groups, even government bodies.

How can these stakeholders be identified?

Who should be involved in decision making?

Limitations of brainstorming sessions

- Brainstorming with other colleagues is a good way of starting to list stakeholders
- But the list is limited by the combined knowledge of the participants in the brainstorming session
- There are other ways to identify potential stakeholders

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Other ways of identifying stakeholders:

- **Secondary data:**
  historical records, correspondence files, newspaper articles, census information

- **Self-selection:**
  encouraging those with an interest to volunteer themselves, for example by holding open meetings

- **Snowballing:**
  one stakeholder helps to identify another, who then identifies another, and so on

How can you promote participation?

The Forestry Commission uses a four strand process to involve the public and stakeholders in its planning decisions:

- Inform
- Consult
- Involve
- Partnerships

Inform

Keeping people informed about what one is planning or doing will promote understanding of the work.

Various tools can be used to inform stakeholders:

- Websites
- Newsletters
- Displays
- Guided walks
- Meetings

Consult

Consulting people about what one is planning will help build trust and commitment within communities.

Various tools can be used to consult stakeholders:

- Interviews

- Questionnaires

- Site visits and surveys

- Meetings with specific groups

- Planning for real

- Workshops

Involve

Involving people in the design, implementation and management of the woodland will help build a sense of ownership.

Various tools can be used to involve stakeholders:

- Task forces; litter, management
- Special interest groups might get actively involved in design; birds, bike trails, youth
- Guided nature walks; 'Springwatch' links
- One off organised events

Partnerships

Building partnerships with people encourages full use of the amenity, and assists the ongoing maintenance and management of the woodland.

It may result in joint use and management of the site, leasing arrangements and even joint budgets.

Partnerships

Various tools can be used to build partnerships:

- 'Friends' groups
- Forest schools and other educational initiatives
- Ongoing woodland management group
- Development of alternative uses – such as allotments
- Working groups – including those involved in woodland management
- Regular events

Ensuring a successful project

Whatever method is chosen:

- Allow timely, fair, professional and effective engagement
- Don't promise what cannot be delivered
- Value all input
- Provide feedback as part of engagement – allow proper time for this
- Monitor the results

Engaging the Community

There follows a list of issues which a project manager would be required to address.

- Which type of community engagement might be the best way to do this, and why?
- Using the table, look at the list of issues.
- Consider how best to tackle them.
- Also think about whether community engagement is the best, or indeed only, form of action.
- Fill in the table.

Engaging the Community

Engaging the Community

Issues	Potential Action(s)				
	Inform	Consult	Involve	Partnership	Other supporting actions – woodland design, management, structures, onsite presence
You need to get rid of the fly tipping and rubbish					
There have been complaints about dog mess					
Local people have requested more allotments					
The local head teacher would like to develop a forest school					

Exercise 1

Engaging the Community

Engaging the Community: Tutor's suggestions

Issues	Potential Action(s)				
	Inform	Consult	Involve	Partnership	Other supporting actions – woodland design, management, structures, onsite presence
You need to get rid of the fly tipping and rubbish			*Use this as an opportunity to get people out*		*Consider barriers to stop vehicles*
There have been complaints about dog mess	*Target dog owners when out on site*				*Design in a dog run* *Check on bins*
Local people have requested more allotments		*Yes – this may mean giving up a bit of the site*		*Almost certainly – you may need to lease land*	
The local head teacher would like to develop a forest school		*Yes – on principle/which part of wood to use. Should it be tested?*	*Schools and parents*	*Yes - definitely*	*Design of woodland – health and safety* *Provision of materials from woodland?*

Engaging the Community

- Clarify the purpose of engagement
  - why do it?
- Determine who has an interest in the woodland
- Select the most appropriate methods to engage these interested parties
  - how can relevant participation be ensured?

Remember:

'Inform' 'Consult' 'Involve' 'Partnerships'

Later parts of the course look at how the results of community engagement might inform the design of an urban woodland.

The next slideshow is entitled 'Minimising Anti-Social Behaviour through Design'.

Community engagement can have a role to play in this, too.