



Briefings

A Briefing in this context means a form of presentation made on a regular basis to local or community groups who may have an interest in forest or woodland planning. They provide an opportunity for you to give information and help people in the area to know the on-going activities. Participants may be invited to ask questions after the presentation in order to bring about discussion and receive feedback. Examples of groups that might be appropriate to receive Briefings are community or parish councils and trade groups. Remember to keep any presentation short and simple, at least until you have been invited back several times, after which the audience may want more detail. Ideally presenters should be staff members who know the project or programme thoroughly and are aware of participants' interests or concerns. The same Briefing may be used for different groups. They are a good way of identifying people who may want further information or who are interested in volunteering to help on particular projects.

Resources and requirements

Skills

- Good public speaking and presentation skills are essential.
- Experience is needed in developing posters or giving presentations, and graphical layout.

Equipment

- Groups who hold regular meetings usually have presentation facilities, but additional presentation equipment may be necessary.
- Briefings are usually held around a small table, in an office or in a conference room.
- Equipment necessary to prepare a talk may include a good camera, poster layout, and other graphics production facilities.

Time

- Usually held on weekday evenings or weekend afternoons, so time required is short.
- New presentations require preparation time, including time to rehearse the talk.

Useful sources of information

Books

- Public involvement in environmental permits: a reference guide. US Environmental Protection Agency (2000). Available from: www.epa.gov

Level of engagement

INFORMING: ★★

CONSULTING: ★

INVOLVING:

PARTNERSHIP:

Strengths

- Briefings allow contact with community members at a time and place where they are comfortable.
- They may provide a good opportunity to reach many people who might be unaware of the process.
- You control the information content and how it is presented.
- Good will can be developed using Briefings.
- They are a good way to establish communication links with affected groups.
- Briefings are relatively inexpensive.

Weaknesses

- If the topic is too technical for the audience, it may not hold their interest well.
- Important stakeholders may not be present, so repeat presentations may be needed.
- Regular use of Briefings can be very time consuming for staff.
- A Briefing cannot be relied upon as a primary method of informing people.

Web

- The Guide to Effective Participation by David Wilcox: www.partnerships.org.uk
- The International Association for Public Participation: www.iap2.org
- Public involvement techniques for transportation decision-making by United States Department of Transportation: www.fhwa.dot.gov/reports/pittd/briefing.htm

This toolbox is designed to assist Forestry Commission staff when they are considering which tools they could use to involve the public in the forest and woodland planning process. For more information please visit the website at: www.forestry.gov.uk/toolbox