

Appendix 4 Working with others principles and approach

A4.1 The 'Working with others - building trust' approach



A4.2 What's different about the 'Working with others' – building trust approach?¹

Put simply, building trust is about improving the way we communicate with each other, being more open and working together. Naturally, we tend to confront or challenge proposals and ideas. If you present someone with an idea, you will almost certainly end up defending it, rather than negotiating.

Traditionally, most public organisations have followed this 'confrontational' approach in most of their planning and decision-making. We have followed this 'Decide, Announce, Defend' (DAD) approach, which has meant we have made decisions, let people know what we plan to do and then had to defend our decisions against those who don't like them.

The DAD approach risks:

- interest groups throwing out our preferred decision, and having to go back to the drawing board;
- relationships and trust breaking down, which makes our work more difficult in the future;
- making decisions without fully understanding relevant issues and reactions, which means they will not be appropriate or introduced.

¹ Extract taken from 'Planning and managing engagement processes – training for staff' M77 course manual

Building trust follows a different approach known as 'front-loading', or 'Engage, Deliberate, Decide' (EDD). This involves working with communities early on to understand their concerns, what they want and why, and working closely with, rather than against, them to decide how best to move forward. We may still make the final decision, but we will have worked with others to come up with the best solution. At the very least, communities will understand the reasons for our decision, and will be less likely to oppose it.

A4.3 The 'Working with others - building trust' principles

How we work with local communities and others is just as important as what we do. Use the following principles to guide all the work you are involved in:

- **Clear boundaries** – make sure people know what the Environment Agency can and cannot consider or do and what can or cannot be changed as a result.
- **Providing information** – give as much information as possible and explain if information is missing, uncertain or not known.
- **Showing respect** – show that people's views really do count and will be acted on wherever possible.
- **Feeding back** – let people know about progress and decisions as soon as possible so that they know what is happening when and why.
- **Taking action** – make people feel it is worth their while taking part by showing how they can affect change.
- **Learning** – communities bring valuable knowledge and insights. You have as much to learn from them as they do from you.
- **Being independent** – try to keep personal views, preferences and personalities out of the process.
- **Targeted approach** – different groups have different needs that you need to consider when working with them.
- **Focused on common results** – look for results that make sense to local people not just those that meet our needs.
- **Making the most of resources** – always make the best use of resources, especially time. The amount of time you spend should depend on how important the issue is. Time spent early on will often save time and effort later.
- **Part of the bigger picture** – our aim is to improve the environment. Be clear from the start how any work with communities and others can help this.