Consultation at Burnham Beeches & Stoke Common

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Our consultation

Stoke Common

Burnham Beeches
Public consultation - Why?

• To ask views on some aspects of management
• To inform about the management planned
• To canvass opinion about potential projects
• To find out any areas of concern
• To encourage buy-in to the plan or project
• To encourage a shared vision
What are you consulting over?

• Be clear about what you are really asking views on and what you are informing people about

• If you are ‘consulting’ then there should be some areas people can genuinely influence (otherwise you are just informing them).

• In consultation over management plans there are likely to be some examples of both information and consultation

As an example:
We would not consult over whether the Beeches to be grazed – this is non negotiable.
But we can consult over the location of fences, gates etc.
When to consult in the management plan process

- Initial gathering of information
- Meeting of invited ‘experts’ on the Common with targeted questions
- Draft production of plan
- **Public consultation**
- Circulate draft plan to ‘experts’
- Alterations/ improvements
- Approval by key organisations
- Final production

i.e. have something to consult on!
How to consult?
Pros & cons of each method

- Questionnaire – paper based
  - Self completing
  - Questions asked by another person

- Questionnaire - web-based

- In person at a public meeting

- In person at a drop-in session

- Less formal, eg talks, guided walks etc
Examples: BB & Dogs

Paper and questioner

• Paper based questionnaire, self completed and also people asking the questions
• General questions about people and their dogs
• Dog walkers and non dog walkers separated
• Included and a list of behaviours and asked people to rate what is acceptable
• Asked for a definition of what a dog under effective control is (range of options)
• 1,262 questionnaires distributed and 500 completed
• Compared with observational survey!
Results of dog survey

Information to form the BB dog code:
The most frequently agreed definition of a dog under effective control:
‘a dog that is kept within the owner’s sight and returns to the owner when called’

Information gained to help us with information provision:
2% of people felt it was acceptable for dogs to chase livestock
5% for it to chase wildlife & to fight with other dogs

51% think it is acceptable to be approached by an unknown dog, but 80% of non dog walkers think this is unacceptable.
Examples: BB car free zone

Paper form

Arose ‘unplanned’ out of a particular situation when some roads were closed temporarily

Paper based form with maps to view and comment on. Also blank map for respondents to draw their own system

One of the best example of consultation we have done because we were really open to any of the outcomes.

People can surprise you!
Drop in sessions
Where to hold them?

On the Common
Indoors in local village hall, church, community centre……

Consider more than one venue (especially if it is a big common or one that two communities have ‘adopted’).
Drop in sessions
When to hold them

When can most people attend?
Evenings
Weekends
Weekdays (more ‘official’ people can more easily attend in work time)

What is realistic for you?
When can you ‘man’ it?

Link it to another event (e.g. local fete)

Try to avoid times you know are difficult for people e.g. summer holidays.
Example: Drop in sessions
Management of Stoke Common

- Local village halls x 2
- Evenings
- Based questions around the management plan with a route to follow in order
- Extensive information about heathland restoration
- Artwork to illustrate
- Questions on encapsulated sheets and boxes
Example: Drop in sessions
BB management plan

- A 3 day event in a marquee on the Main Common. Friday – Sunday.

- Started early to include regular dog walkers

- Designed in-house & very structured

- An opportunity for stakeholders to give their views on the 500 year vision for BB and 10 years management plan

- Opportunities for people to comment on other aspects of our work and facilities
Management Plan 2010 - 2020
Public Consultation Event

• 788 visitors participated over the 3 days

• Data sent to Manchester Metropolitan University for analysis

• Results were very supportive of the 500 Year Vision and the expansion of the conservation grazing across the site

• The final results were incorporated into the Burnham Beeches Management Plan
Public Consultation results

How far do you live from Burnham Beeches?

- 25% <1 mile
- 17% 1-2 miles
- 24% 3-5 miles
- 14% 6-9 miles
- 19% >10 miles

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Bar chart showing the distribution of distances from Burnham Beeches.
How do you usually travel to the Beeches?

- Walk: 23%
- Cycle: 6%
- Horse: 1%
- Motorcycle: 0%
- Car: 69%
- Public transport: 1%
- Other: 0%

The chart shows the distribution of travel methods over different times of the day and across the three days of the week.
Public Consultation results

What is your main reason for coming to Burnham Beeches?

- 41% Walk
- 11% Watch nature
- 29% Walk dog
- 5% Jog/run
- 6% Cycle
- 1% Ride horse
- 7% Food & drink
- 1% Other
Public Consultation results

How would you feel about as much of the Beeches as possible being grazed?

- Strongly agree: 34%
- Agree: 37%
- No opinion: 6%
- Disagree: 17%
- Strongly disagree: 6%

The chart shows the distribution of responses by time and day:
- Friday total
- Saturday morning
- Saturday afternoon
- Saturday total
- Sunday morning
- Sunday lunchtime
- Sunday afternoon
- Sunday total
- TOTAL (all three days)
Public Consultation results

How do you feel about the installation of cattle grids on minor roads?

- 42% Strongly agree
- 43% Agree
- 6% No opinion
- 6% Disagree
- 3% Strongly disagree

Friday total:
- Strongly agree: 10
- Agree: 10
- No opinion: 2
- Disagree: 2
- Strongly disagree: 1

Saturday morning:
- Strongly agree: 5
- Agree: 5
- No opinion: 1
- Disagree: 1
- Strongly disagree: 1

Saturday afternoon:
- Strongly agree: 5
- Agree: 5
- No opinion: 1
- Disagree: 1
- Strongly disagree: 1

Saturday total:
- Strongly agree: 30
- Agree: 30
- No opinion: 5
- Disagree: 5
- Strongly disagree: 5

Sunday morning:
- Strongly agree: 10
- Agree: 10
- No opinion: 2
- Disagree: 2
- Strongly disagree: 2

Sunday lunchtime:
- Strongly agree: 10
- Agree: 10
- No opinion: 2
- Disagree: 2
- Strongly disagree: 2

Sunday afternoon:
- Strongly agree: 30
- Agree: 30
- No opinion: 5
- Disagree: 5
- Strongly disagree: 5

Sunday total:
- Strongly agree: 90
- Agree: 90
- No opinion: 15
- Disagree: 15
- Strongly disagree: 15

TOTAL (all three days):
- Strongly agree: 160
- Agree: 160
- No opinion: 34
- Disagree: 34
- Strongly disagree: 34
Public Consultation results

How do you rate the quality of the cafe?

- 36% Very good
- 42% Good
- 14% Average
- 2% Poor
- 1% Very poor
- 6% Don't know

Frequency distribution over time:
- Friday total
- Saturday morning
- Saturday afternoon
- Saturday total
- Sunday morning
- Sunday lunchtime
- Sunday afternoon
- Sunday total
- TOTAL (all three days)
Public Consultation results

How do you rate the quality of the ranger service?

- Very good: 25%
- Good: 22%
- Average: 4%
- Poor: 1%
- Very poor: 2%
- Don't know: 45%

Friday total: [Graphical data]
Saturday morning: [Graphical data]
Saturday afternoon: [Graphical data]
Saturday total: [Graphical data]
Sunday morning: [Graphical data]
Sunday lunchtime: [Graphical data]
Sunday afternoon: [Graphical data]
Sunday total: [Graphical data]
TOTAL (all three days): [Graphical data]
Examples of ways to ask questions
Lessons learnt

- Be up front about what is being consulted on (and what isn’t)
- Provide an explanation to put the question in context, don’t just ask the question
- Include the scary bits (e.g. big machinery) because then you can’t be accused of hiding things
Lessons learnt: Questions

- Start with a few general easy questions to get going
- Be aware that previous responses influence subsequent ones
- Have some open questions, not just those needing direct answers
- Make sure there is somewhere for people to get issues off their chests!
Lessons learnt

• Have helpers to start people off, assist with difficult bits & answer queries

• But not too many that you outnumber the visitors and put them off by watching!

• Provide a reward (a cup of tea & biscuit!)

• Chairs for taking a rest (encourages people to stay longer)
Display material

- Doesn’t have to be complex and fancy
- Does need to be clear and understandable – pictures help
- Difficult to get a balance between giving information so that people read and understand the context without being overbearing
- Remind people of what has been agreed earlier
- Don’t dumb down, most people completed all our questions.
Thank you & good luck!