



Preparation is the key to consultation success, according the Consultation Institute

Ahead of [Consultation and Stakeholder Engagement for Infrastructure](#) on 18th June in London, The Consultation Institute's Ruth Shepherd delivers her insight on the challenges faced when dealing with public consultations and the best way to plan and adapt your consultation strategy.

Ruth Shepherd *Institute Associate* The Consultation Institute

What is the most common challenge you face in dealing with public consultations?

Respect for the whole process of public consultation. Public consultation is a gathering of views, but for consultation to be meaningful, both sides have to be open to influence. Consultees often complain they are not being listened to, but they also need to be prepared to listen. Equally, consultors state they are 'keen to hear what people think' but they need to demonstrate they are not only listening, but are hearing what people are saying. The ability to influence and be influenced is a requirement of both parties. The challenge of achieving mutual respect from those involved in public consultation is another conversation!

What advice would you give someone starting to plan their consultation strategy?

Plan, plan and plan some more. Preparation really is key and if you don't understand the community, site history, background, and community concerns, challenges and perceptions, how can you start building a relationship through which engagement will lead to effective and meaningful consultation? Desk-top and site/community-based research proves invaluable – don't just rely on information provided to you from within the project team.

How can you adapt your engagement throughout the development and construction on the project?

As important as planning and preparation are to any engagement activity, just as important is the willingness, ability and time to be flexible in your planned approach, and respond to changing circumstances and opportunities. Building a review – or series of reviews – into your engagement programme gives the opportunity to not only assess level and nature of responses, but also to identify any opportunities to reach additional stakeholders, increase activity or shape planned engagement to increase the effectiveness your efforts. Consider the mapped stakeholders, planned activities, methods of communicating and ask yourself: 'What more could we do? Are we missing an opportunity?'



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...including HS2, Burges Salmon, Holmes Group Consulting and more at [Consultation and Stakeholder Engagement for Infrastructure](#), taking place in London at Burges Salmon on Tuesday 18th June.

Tickets start from just £249 + VAT (group booking discounts available). For full details of the programme and how to secure your place visit <http://bit.ly/2XNeVQu>.

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