



Infrastructure and the Citizen

A Dialogue by Design and UCL Transport
Institute policy paper

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Introduction

On Monday 23 March 2015, Dialogue by Design and the UCL Transport Institute co-hosted a seminar, *We Need to Talk about Infrastructure*, chaired by Jim Steer of Steer Davies Gleave. We posed a simple question: when Government plans to invest £375 billion in infrastructure projects up to 2020¹, how can this be done with local communities, rather than against them?

Each of our speakers addressed this question in their own way: Dr Jack Stilgoe, *Lecturer in Social Studies of Science, UCL*, spoke about potential parallels with science engagement, which had undergone its own journey in the 1990s from trying to communicate with and persuade citizens of the merits of particular technologies, to attempts to understand the public's perspectives through deliberative engagement.

Professor Brian Collins, *former Chief Scientific Adviser for the Department for Transport and now at UCL*, focused on the governance for infrastructure decision-making and how its fragmented nature has weakened public consent from citizens for major projects.

Will Bridges, *Lead Consents Officer at National Grid*, highlighted the importance of close community engagement for the North West Coasts Connection Project, one of the most far-reaching plans to connect a power station to the Grid since its creation in the 1960s.

Dr Diane Beddoes, *Chief Executive at Dialogue by Design*, spoke of the practicalities of improving engagement, in the context of a collapse in public trust in decision-makers. Participants, who were drawn from the public, private and third sectors enriched the debate with lively and informed contributions throughout.

Rather than simply produce a summary of the event, we wanted to reflect on what we had heard and learnt, and write a few short pieces on how we think the discussions that took place could advance the conversation about how best to engage concerning major infrastructure. Here, we address four themes:

Morgan Wild, *Project Manager at Dialogue by Design*, discusses the extent to which taking the politics out of infrastructure decision-making could enhance the public's voice;

Dr Tom Cohen, *Deputy Director of the UCL Transport Institute* asks what it means for engagement to be seen as part of a social contract;

Ian Thompson, *Analysis Manager at Dialogue by Design*, discusses the extent to which infrastructure presents special problems for engagement and dialogue; and

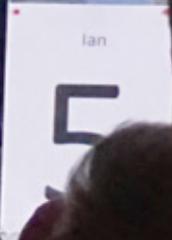
Elena de Besi, *Project Coordinator at Dialogue by Design*, discusses the opportunities that our 'sharing' of infrastructure creates for overcoming the lack of public acceptance and the consequences in terms of engagement and planning.

Because the meeting was held under the Chatham House Rule (*Chatham House 2014*), quotations are not attributed to individuals.



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'Depoliticising Infrastructure': Can a strategic approach enhance public engagement?

MORGAN WILD, PROJECT MANAGER, DIALOGUE BY DESIGN

Many of our participants were concerned about the ways in which politics distorts the strategy and decision-making process for infrastructure in the United Kingdom.

Here, we discuss the prospects for depoliticising infrastructure, the challenges this raises for democratic accountability and the ways in which an independent body could make the public voice in infrastructure decision-making a little louder.

Professor Brian Collins' argument was that decision making about infrastructure in the United Kingdom is fragmented and lacks strategy: generations of deregulation and privatisation have – irrespective of the intended efficiency benefits – led to a patchwork of different companies, regulators, policymakers and politicians, each with partial responsibility for the provision of different infrastructure.

As a result, little strategic planning takes place: the Government's National Infrastructure Plan is simply a list of all the infrastructure projects under development or construction. The question is whether an attempt to centralise strategic responsibility for all major infrastructure projects would be a help or a hindrance. It is clear that such an

approach commands support among at least some politicians and many developers. One proposal, mentioned by some of our participants, would be to place responsibility for strategy in a National Infrastructure Commission (NIC), as proposed in the Armit Review (*Armitt 2013*). This would, every ten years, produce a National Infrastructure Assessment that holistically analyses the UK's infrastructure needs for the following 25-30 years and would make recommendations regarding the type and scale needed – recommendations that the Government would be compelled by statute to put before Parliament.

This is just one example of how infrastructure decision making could be centralised; you can imagine versions of such a Commission that go even further, placing responsibility for initiating and recommending individual schemes in the hands of an independent body, with politicians only involved through signing off decisions at the end. These possibilities raise interesting questions about whether this is desirable; in thinking about the sphere of public engagement, would this enhance or diminish the public voice?

There are, of course, potentially powerful advantages for developers in taking the politics out of infrastructure. As one of our participants stated, *"An NIC would take the decisions about what kind of infrastructure we need out of the political arena – stop it being a political football"*. Placing infrastructure planning on a 30-year footing might increase confidence about investment decisions. Decoupling the infrastructure cycle from the (at best) five-year political cycle might allow for more ambitious schemes to be considered and for fewer delays caused by politicians

Our current, fragmented approach to decision making disempowers many, because it is not clear to the public how different projects relate to each other until it is too late.

procrastinating over whether they should back a project now rather than after an election. As Professor Collins said, *“You tend to get things done that can be done in five years – think about runways in southeast England, which have been on the agenda for decades”*. Depoliticising infrastructure, therefore, could potentially solve some seemingly intractable problems.

But might there also be costs? There is, surely, a limit on the extent to which politics can be taken out of infrastructure: infrastructure decisions are, by their nature, political. Whether we build a runway at Heathrow or Gatwick or not at all; whether we build HS2 or invest in local railways or both; whether we believe our energy future lies in solar, wind or nuclear – all these are questions not just of technical deliberation, but of contested values. We elect, you might think, our politicians on the basis of whether they share these values; it seems strange to cede these decisions to a technocracy of experts.

There are, therefore, questions of democratic accountability facing an independent infrastructure commission which would need to be addressed. The Armitage Review attempted to do this by making clear that its version of an infrastructure commission would be strategic rather than scheme-specific and that politicians would retain ultimate control over the infrastructure decision-making process. More detail would be needed about how this

would work in practice. However, democratic engagement does not take place only at the ballot box. In principle, a body which is responsible for producing a strategic overview and a coherent set of infrastructure schemes might compellingly enhance the public voice, in a range of ways which our participants and speakers identified.

Firstly, our current, fragmented approach to decision making disempowers many, because it is not clear to the public how different projects relate to each other until it is too late. Will Bridges, Consents Officer for National Grid’s North West Coasts Connection project, told us about its plans to connect the electricity generated by a new nuclear power station to the National Grid, and the valuable ways in which local knowledge had influenced their proposals. But, while comments about a particular route option or area might have significant influence, there was no option for no connection to be made at all. National Grid must build some connection between the power station and the Grid, leaving some residents understandably aggrieved that they have not had a proper opportunity to interrogate the strategy for energy production and transmission. A more strategic approach might make the relationships between different infrastructure projects more apparent at an earlier stage.

However, such an approach could go further than consulting citizens on an infrastructure strategy. An independent commission could build them in from the start: public representation could be integrated in high-level governance and as part of devising the strategy, at various stages engaging representative samples of the public in surveys, focus groups, deliberative engagement

and dialogues. One of our participants described prior attempts by Government to involve the public at a more strategic and in depth level:

“DECC [the Department of Energy and Climate Change] did some regional conferences with members of the public, to talk about future energy needs. That was great...The idea that you get 80-100 people in a room asking what should we do in the next 50 years? Maybe only getting people in a room together gets you that quality of response”.

Moreover, the current decision-making system, as one participant argued, assigns too much weight to individual politicians’ preferences for schemes over an objective assessment of cost, with the public only involved when the politician places the preferred option before them. Much distrust of infrastructure planning could reflect public scepticism about the rigour lying behind the options presented to it. As Dr Diane Beddoes (Chief Executive at Dialogue by Design) said, the public’s trust of experts (54%) far outstrips their trust in politicians (3%)² (*Confederation of British Industry 2014*). Ensuring that projects have the ‘stamp of approval’ from trusted, independent experts could reduce the deleterious effects that distrust has on public engagement and discourse about infrastructure projects.

There remain challenges in involving the public at a strategic level. The prevailing trend is for further devolution of decision-making, rather than towards greater centralisation; and some argue that this is appropriate in certain infrastructure planning contexts – for example, participants argued that local politicians tend to remain in their communities for longer than national politicians, and so are more committed to good decision making. Certain participants worried, however, that devolving decision making could sometimes reduce community involvement and that *“to devolve decision-*

An independent commission for infrastructure planning could improve the public role in infrastructure decision making.

making down is great, but then you haven’t got the channels to bring it back up to look at how the pieces of the jigsaw fit together”.

Also, some of our participants were sceptical as to whether there was great appetite among the public for strategic engagement; in transport, for example: *“I think that’s a real problem – trying to get people to think across modes of transport – trying to engage the public would be pretty difficult...It’s too strategic at a high level”.* Both Dr Diane Beddoes and Dr Jack Stilgoe put forward a contrasting view, drawing on their experience of projects with Sciencewise, the UK’s national centre for public dialogue in policy making involving science and technology, where they had discovered public appetite and aptitude for the most complex and technical of subject matters when approached and explained skilfully (and – it should be said – when citizens were properly recompensed for their time).

An independent commission for infrastructure planning could, then, improve the public role in infrastructure decision making. It is true that some of these suggestions do not depend on depoliticising infrastructure. Government departments can – and some do – involve the public at a more strategic level than is current common practice. However, for many problems with our current engagement system, taking some of the politics out of infrastructure and creatively embedding the public within a new framework may substantially enhance the public’s voice.

5 ¹ An Ipsos Mori poll of 1,016 adults conducted on behalf of the Confederation of British Industry found that 54% of the public trusted technical experts to make the case for infrastructure projects, compared with 3% who trusted Government ministers and 19% who trusted their local MP.



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Dr Jack Stilgoe, Lecturer in Social Studies of Science, UCL

The social contract of engagement

—
DR. TOM COHEN, UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON

It is common for the narrative concerning engagement to concentrate on the poor performance of those in positions of power: developers and decision makers are portrayed as cynical, manipulative, insincere. This same narrative typically paints the citizen as disenfranchised, misled, ignored.

But perhaps the narrative is itself insincere: it reflects a paternalistic 'there there' attitude that characterises citizens as gauche and inept. If nothing else, the narrative is incomplete because it does not allow for the substantial (and growing) segment of the citizenry that demonstrates real confidence with the planning process, not to mention a striking ability to use communication methods to its advantage.

It also ignores the fact that there's a contrasting story in which earnest scheme promoters and decision makers may make extensive and innovative efforts to engage citizens in dialogue, only to be met with uninterest and distrust.

"I find...that a lot of people are quite happy to say what they don't like, that there's a problem here, you need to solve it. I often say 'what do you suggest?' and they often

don't know, they just know there's a problem or they don't like your particular solution. There's not far you can go with that".

Nonetheless, the narrative prevails, determining that, in any disagreement between citizen and the powerful, the powerful must be in the wrong. But should this be so?

"People have the right to live under a rock if they so desire...There is no obligation for them to know what's going on. Maybe there should be [an obligation] in order to be informed about what's happening in their community".

A compelling argument in favour of citizens being more engaged is that we share infrastructure: in the UK and other developed countries, there is (currently) no need for individuals to own generators because the collective system provides power reliably and efficiently. But isn't our acceptance of a reliable supply part of a contract, one in which simply paying the bills though necessary, is not sufficient?

"There's an argument that says: if you don't like that, go off and do it by yourself".

If our participation in this and other collective systems implies a contract, what are we actually saying citizens' obligations are? On the assumption that the powerful are sincere in seeking dialogue, they presumably want citizens to engage consistently and constructively in the planning process. Beyond this, there is some recognition that it may be too much to expect citizens to think strategically or to desert personal interest.

The British should abandon their diffidence about discussing politics – our tendency to avoid such topics in polite conversation serves to give them the appearance of being unimportant.

“We have almost accepted that we have never got past the point that people are principally motivated by how they would be affected: they don’t care about what [the scheme] would do for the country’s economy in 20 years’ time. They think about their retirement!”

How, then, to foster consistent and constructive engagement? Education is one suggestion.

“Do the children know the political system in the UK? Do they learn it at school? No, never. Never learned about the Houses of Parliament etc. In Australia, it is compulsory and voting is as well. Compulsory to educate your children”.

Why stop at children? We would be waiting some time for classroom training to percolate to the wider population so why not “upskill” the adult population too? Subtlety would be required here, if accusations of paternalism were to be avoided.

A second suggestion is that the British abandon their diffidence about discussing politics – our tendency to avoid such topics in polite conversation serves to give them the appearance of being unimportant.

And there is much that the powerful could themselves do to make this contract acceptable to citizens: engage sincerely, proportionately, continuously and from early on; make the process

enjoyable; provide real options rather than a preferred design flanked by manifestly weak alternatives; transfer some real power to citizens; provide feedback after decisions are made.

The issue of transferring power may be the sticking point for the powerful and it is probably at the same time the single largest obstacle to citizen compliance with the contract.

“Lots of resistance to that because [decision makers] don’t want to lose control – if you’re going to do this [engagement] properly, you have to lose a bit of control, put something at risk, so that people don’t feel that engagement is disingenuous”.

Leaving feasibility to one side for a moment though, it is striking that all of the suggested actions for the powerful happen also to constitute what is considered ‘engagement best practice’. And perhaps that is the most useful finding: if they adopt the principles of sound engagement, they will get rather more than the occasional plaudit; they will get what they want.



Is infrastructure a special case for dialogue?

IAN THOMPSON, ANALYSIS MANAGER, DIALOGUE BY DESIGN

Is it possible to have genuine public deliberation on a high speed rail line? Or a public dialogue about an electricity connection?

A key objective of the event was to encourage comparison and learning from public engagement practice in other sectors, and two of our speakers explored this theme in their presentations, looking at good practice in engagement and dialogue. Dr Jack Stilgoe talked about moving infrastructure up-stream, while DbyD's Chief Executive Dr Diane Beddoes talked about how to improve the quality of engagement on infrastructure generally, and the need to move beyond an approach based purely on compliance with legal requirements that characterises many such projects. Both these speakers referred to dialogue projects run by Sciencewise, the UK's national centre for public dialogue in policy making involving science and technology, which uses innovative methods to engage the public on complex and controversial issues³.

It is clear that there is a lot of room for improvement in engagement on major infrastructure, as the recent Green Alliance report *Opening up Infrastructure Planning*

documented in detail (Mount 2015). On the other hand, the table discussions at the event threw up many of the unique challenges of engaging on major projects. These challenges would appear to be a significant barrier to the more exploratory, open-ended approaches to dialogue associated with Sciencewise. Are these approaches applicable to major infrastructure schemes, or is infrastructure a special case for dialogue?

Perhaps the most obvious challenge associated with engagement on major infrastructure schemes in contrast to many public dialogues is the number of people directly (or at least potentially) affected. While science and technology policy has the potential to affect an equally large, even greater number of people, the impacts of a major infrastructure scheme are clearly unequal. Those potentially affected have a clear stake in the scheme, and the need for such individuals and organisations to be represented directly in the engagement (as opposed to indirectly through a representative focus group sample) limits the choice of methods and discourages innovation. One participant went as far as to ask if there was a direct trade-off between the scale of engagement and its quality:

"Is there a trade-off between the quantity of people you reach and the quality of the engagement? Get together 30-40 people and run a well designed process and those people feel like they've made a difference to the decision-making. That's great for those people, but one of the problems to solve is how you come up with mechanisms that achieve the same quality of 'felt engagement' with wider processes when you're not able to do things face to face".

³ <http://www.sciencewise-erc.org.uk/>. For a recent review of Sciencewise programme and its approach to public engagement, see <http://www.sciencewise-erc.org.uk/cms/assets/Uploads/Best-ofFINAL.pdf>

Participants reflected that the challenges associated with pre-application consultation are often compounded by the timetable of engagement on major infrastructure. In particular, those potentially affected often continue to return to discussion of the need case even at later stages where options are presented and proposals are refined. What we might refer to as the inevitable ‘messiness’ of these projects (in terms of this interplay between interests and narrative) presents clear challenges for formal consultation processes.

“The complete journey from assessing the need to implementation is not always clear to participants. The decision to go ahead with the project may have been taken a long time ago, with subsequent changes of government who will have sold the project to the public in different ways. There may also be different organisations involved at different stages of the project’s life-cycle. If the public are not aware of the wider picture and wider engagement activities then they may be more willing to try and take discussions back to issues previously resolved”.

On the other hand, we could see a potential application of more dialogue-based processes here: the use of more deliberative methods, unrestricted by the linear process of formalised consultation could help to explore the relationship between views on strategic issues and concerns about local impacts.

Transparency and the need for a clear audit trail are key requirements of major infrastructure schemes, and they limit the choice of appropriate methods for engagement. Promoters of these schemes are subject to strict regulatory requirements to demonstrate that public views and concerns have been sought and

Transparency and the need for a clear audit trail are key requirements of major infrastructure schemes, and they limit the choice of appropriate methods for engagement.

considered. This is particularly the case with those schemes designated ‘Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects’ which are subject to the prescriptive requirements for pre-application engagement and consultation set out in the Planning Act 2008. As Dr Jack Stilgoe admitted in relation to the dialogue on synthetic biology, while a Sciencewise-style dialogue allows for public deliberation of deeply controversial and complex topics, it doesn’t facilitate this need for auditability:

“It didn’t provide any answers for policy makers. You might ask what do the public think about synthetic biology? You’d be disappointed, because these questions are characterised by vast uncertainty.”

This is not just about the requirements of scheme promoters: the participant perspective is important here too. When talking about building trust in engagement processes, one participant emphasised the importance of respondents (or participants) being able to see how their views will affect the outcome, otherwise simply asking for views can seem like a ‘one-way process’.

Finally, cost may be another factor, especially in the context of publicly funded developments. For example, one promoter noted that it was difficult to secure funding for behavioural research. To some extent this reflects that public engagement, viewed as something auxiliary to the overall planning and development of

a scheme, is often not a priority for funding and project management in general. But it was encouraging that Will Bridges asserted in his presentation that engagement and consultation, if done properly, actually reduce the overall timescale of the project as well as improving the final proposals for the scheme. This recognition was reiterated in table discussions.

There is a clear enthusiasm on the part of promoters for improving the quality of their engagement methods and processes.

Despite the points raised in discussions about the unique challenges faced by practitioners in this field, comments from the event suggest that there is a clear enthusiasm on the part of promoters for improving the quality of their engagement methods and processes. For example, one promoter shared their experience of using behavioural research alongside a formal consultation process. As well as allowing them to *“explore the perspectives and needs of specific groups”*, they also noted that this encouraged participants to consider and engage with the views and interests of others – hinting at the social compromise implied in Professor Brian Collins’ term ‘shared infrastructure’. Another participant suggested that consultation was often too serious and ‘stuffy’ and that presenting issues in a more fun way would make them more accessible and engaging. They mentioned a government consultation on parks which made use of a video game to encourage participation. These examples have a similar rationale to the Department of Energy and Climate Change’s (DECC) online 2050 simulation tool (Delib n.d.) which Dr Diane Beddoes referred to in her

presentation, encouraging people to engage with the trade-offs involved in strategic policy – a form of deliberation.

It’s clear that to some extent infrastructure is a special case for dialogue. That’s not to say that more innovative and engaging methods can’t be applied though, just that promoters will have to be more proactive and inventive in applying them. The enthusiastic participation in our event suggests that there is hope on this front. As we’ve seen, there is potential for dialogue approaches to be used alongside the formal statutory consultation process, helping views to be explored in greater depth. Moreover, at a more strategic level – in the development of national infrastructure policy, for example, it is far easier to see the possibilities of a Sciencewise-style public dialogue⁴.

⁴ See Morgan Wild’s chapter on ‘Depoliticising Infrastructure’ for discussion of this.



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Dr Diane Beddoes, Chief Executive, Dialogue by Design

IV Shared infrastructure: the way past the failure of public acceptance?

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ELENA DE BESI, PROJECT COORDINATOR, DIALOGUE BY DESIGN

We expect infrastructure to exist as a citizen's right: infrastructure that is not just provided for the sake and benefit of a limited number, but that we can all use and access safely, that is limited in its environmental impacts and provides a high level of service to citizens. But this expectation does not seem to create symmetric obligations for citizens, if not to embrace, then at least to accept the disruption that attends its construction.

Is there an approach to infrastructure provision that could help get past the lack of public acceptance? And, if so, what are the consequences in terms of planning and engagement?

In recent years decision makers and developers in the United Kingdom have learned how a lack of public consensus can prevent the efficient and timely delivery of infrastructure (*CBI, 2014*) that is essential to responding to pressing challenges such as population growth and climate change. The acronym 'BANANA' (Build Absolutely Nothing Anywhere Near Anything) has often been used to characterise the vehement local opposition that accompanies many major

infrastructure schemes. Benefits from major infrastructure projects are often distant prospects and are shared with many others. This can make them difficult to grasp fully, whilst their construction and operation cause very visible and immediate economic, social and environmental negative impacts. Moreover, the massive costs of these projects are usually – if only in part – paid for by the public. The overall decision-making and funding processes are often perceived as lacking openness and transparency, notwithstanding the requirement for public consultation for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIP) under the Planning Act 2008 (DCLG, 2009).

Advocates must recognise that infrastructure always involves winners and losers; each with their own legitimate yet potentially conflicting interests that must be respected. Whilst these 'wicked problems' by definition have no easy solution, participants at our event agreed strongly on two points. For starters, understanding why something is actually done is a necessary though not sufficient step towards its acceptance. Second, a much better job needs to be done to convey to the public why an infrastructure scheme is needed, and why that location, timescale and technology are the most appropriate in a given case. This is especially true for major infrastructure schemes, which will likely affect certain groups that will neither make any use of nor receive any indirect benefits from those schemes.

In such cases, Professor Brian Collins argued that leveraging the concept of 'shared infrastructure' might contribute to making the need case, increasing the legitimacy of a scheme and reducing the likelihood of widespread opposition. Looking at

infrastructure as 'shared' means acknowledging the social value we get from it (*Frischmann, 2012*). In fact, infrastructure shapes the economic, social, cultural and political systems in which human activities take place, allowing us to participate in these systems as individuals and as members of a society. This value is, however, often taken for granted. Most of the time we tend to forget that, whilst we might be negatively affected by the construction of a road 50 metres from our home, we are almost certainly making use of the electricity carried along unsightly pylons whose appearance disturbs communities distant from us. The key issue here is getting the message across that there are both negative impacts and shared benefits across different types of infrastructure, and that these are linked to one another and exist in a system.

If people understood the shared nature of infrastructure, there is a real chance they would oppose it less.

Another key consideration here is that these rights and obligations should be shared fairly. It is certainly true that some communities or social groups are more adversely affected than others by certain types of development. Whilst distributional impacts should be a key part of analysing shared infrastructure, this lies outside the scope of this paper. Ultimately, the shared nature of infrastructure relates to the fundamental rights and obligations that as individuals we have in a society: the right to infrastructure that is functional, safe, and respectful of the environment; but also an obligation to pay a price in order to enjoy and make use of it⁵. So, if people understood the

shared nature of infrastructure, there is a real chance they would oppose it less. We argue, though, that the opportunity to leverage the rights and obligations of the public in relation to shared infrastructure relies on two interdependent conditions. The first is having a strategic planning system, and the second is creating a space for meaningful public engagement on the need case.

More and more is being said on the need to have a strategic and cross-sector approach to national infrastructure planning in the UK⁶, as opposed to a piece-meal, reactive and short-sighted one (Mount, 2015). Participants at our event emphasised that this lack of strategy means there is no transparency about the criteria by which the need for a scheme under discussion is to be judged. This leads to much of the controversy and lack of support that prevent long-term investment in infrastructure.

Whilst public consultation on infrastructure is intended to build the basis for legitimacy and thus reduce controversy, the way it is often carried out has significant limitations. Many public consultations take place at the very end of the development process, only allowing the public to express its views on how a scheme should look, and not if it is actually needed. There is no deliberative process in place at present where genuine negotiation concerning principles can take place.

Effective public engagement needs to convey what specific problem a project is intended to address, as well as the inter and intra-sector linkages with other 'shared' infrastructure. At the same time, it needs to allow the public to contribute meaningfully on the question of need in order to build national consensus on which priorities are to be addressed, how, when and where. It should then be much easier to

15 ⁵ Dr. Tom Cohen explores into more detail the obligations we have as citizens in his piece "The social contract of engagement" above.

⁶ Morgan Wild makes the case for this in his piece, "Depoliticising infrastructure" above.

A strategic infrastructure plan in which each scheme makes a defined contribution to an agreed over-arching objective and provides shared value is likely to build trust in the long term.

justify the case for any individual scheme as, ideally, it would sit coherently within a vision of the nation's overall needs which the public has helped to develop.

The current decision-making and consultation process has understandably led to a widespread and deep-rooted lack of trust that has eroded belief in the shared nature of infrastructure. When people feel excluded from decision making, they become more distant, disengaged and suspicious of the real motives behind a scheme being proposed. A strategic infrastructure plan in which each scheme makes a defined contribution to an agreed over-arching objective and provides shared value is likely to build trust in the long term. Engaging both early in the process and specifically on the question of need will equally help to restore public trust, as citizens would be more likely to perceive that decisions on questions of principle and locations are not simply being imposed on them.

So, having a strategic planning process and a space for meaningful public engagement are mutually reinforcing and necessary for the public to adopt the concept of infrastructure as shared. If the public is not presented with the need case and provided with a meaningful opportunity to debate it, we cannot expect them to accept their obligations. The same will be the case if there is no clear purpose or long-term vision behind the schemes that are brought forward. Putting

these conditions in place is not an easy task. But a persistent absence of public acceptance might in time produce a planning system that is unable to respond to the future needs of our society. In the long run, only an approach that is founded on the rights and obligations we have as members of a society would allow for the provision of infrastructure that is effective, timely and built on public legitimacy.

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Dr Diane Beddoes, *Dialogue by Design*,
Jim Steer, *Steer Davies Gleave*, and
Professor Brian Collins, *UCL*

We asked participants to tell us one thing they'll be doing differently as a result of the event. Here's what they had to say...

"I'll re-evaluate ways of building trust in engagement"

"Get out there and talk to as many people as possible. Not to be afraid of disagreement or dissent - give it time!"

"Ask the following questions: Whatever the project - what is the purpose? Why do you want to do it? What do you want to achieve? What are the unintended consequences? How do you know when you're right?"

"Consider 'the need' element in engagement so those involved understand what the point of the project is. Also to be clear in any future engagement what is up for grabs"

About Dialogue by Design



Dialogue by Design was founded in 1999 to provide tailored and professional consultation and engagement services. We work across a range of sectors and use a wide range of techniques. We specialise in handling consultations on contentious or technically complex issues and are experts in running consultations for nationally significant infrastructure projects (NSIPs). Much of our work is multi-method, combining face-to-face and digital approaches. Our unique in-house tool for online consultation enables us to analyse large volumes of responses easily, quickly and accurately.

Dialogue by Design is part of the OPM Group – an independent, employee-owned consultancy which comprises OPM and Dialogue by Design. We work closely with our OPM colleagues on many projects, particularly complex public and stakeholder dialogues. We also have a wide network of associates in the fields of stakeholder dialogue, public participation and consultation, training, conflict resolution and software design, enabling us to field individuals and teams that meet the particular needs of our clients. Our partners on projects include leading academics, creative agencies, communications experts and ethnographers.

About UCL Transport Institute



The purpose of the UCL Transport Institute is to harness the expertise across disciplines to show to the world how our research addresses these core values using a person centred, complex systems approach. The Institute aims to bring together the research community, policy makers, practitioners, and the public in a series of engagement events to show how translating research into practice can help achieve these values.

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