**WEALDSTONE BROOK WORKSHOPS – *HOW TO***

**Process overview:**

**PREPARATIONS**

**Facilitating Wealdstone Brook Workshops**

Facilitated workshops are an opportunity for people to think together in a structured way using a series of activities designed to foster collaboration. The facilitator is responsible for ensuring a collaborative atmosphere during the workshops making all participants feel that their knowledge is worth contributing and that their points of view are respected. Planning a facilitated workshop takes considerable time as it comprises many steps, including defining the goals of the workshop, choosing participants and location, developing, and testing the programme of activities, and summarising, as well as communicating the results of the workshops.

Ten steps to organise Wealdstone Brook Workshops:

1. Define a focussed goal for the workshops.
2. Bring together a mix of people who all have either an active interest or an influence over the outcome of achieving the goal.
3. Decide the duration of each workshop will take and the time in between them, taking into consideration the time constraints of participants.
4. Design a programme of activities for each workshop and create a detailed facilitation guide with a timed schedule.
5. Decide on a neutral and accessible location for all participants.
6. Invite participants, follow up with confirmation to those accepting the invitation and reminders to those not responding.
7. Run the workshop according to the facilitation guide. At the end of the workshop, make sure to thank participants for their time and announce next steps.
8. Analyse the results of the workshop and write a draft report.
9. Communicate the draft report to the workshop participants and invite their feedback.
10. Send out the final report of the findings to all participants after integrating their feedback.

**Outlining the problem**

To change a catchment for the better, a robust idea about its problems and how these problems are perceived by catchment stakeholders is needed. In-depth interviewing is a powerful method for finding out how a community perceives issues.

Who to talk to?

Create a list of catchment stakeholders and talk to people representing them. Ask each interviewee at the end of the interview to refer you to someone else they know and who would be willing to talk to you to make sure that you have been comprehensive. As the answers to your questions start sounding similar meaning that you have contacted all the active stakeholder groups. 16-20 interviews will probably suffice for a small catchment.

What and how to ask?

Interview questions should be as open-ended as possible to prompt your interviewees’ thinking process. Ask for example “what problems do you perceive?”. Ask questions directed at the context in which their reasoning takes place, such as, “what was going on at the time when you arrived at idea X?”. Interviews can be conducted in-person, by phone or video call and each one can take anywhere between 20 minutes and one hour.

How to analyse

After completing the interviews search for patterns in the answers. Are there any recurring issues that stakeholders keep bringing up? What are their different perspectives on the same issue? How do they perceive each other relative to the issues? How do their responses sit with existing environmental data, reports or plans? Based on these patterns, form a hypothesis that makes sense to all stakeholders.

**Surveying the stakeholders**

Stakeholder analysis for a change process has the successful delivery of a specific issue in mind e.g., improving water quality in the catchment.

Some stakeholders might hold a lot of influence over the solution for an issue but might not be very interested in its outcome without outside motivation. For instance, this might be the case with a busy Council executive or utility director. Other stakeholders might be quite interested in the outcome of the project but have few means to ensure its success, e.g. local environmentalists. Stakeholder analysis helps to categorise stakeholders along the crucial dimension of power and device strategies for engaging different types of stakeholders.

Follow three main steps: first, identify stakeholders and their issues. Second, categorise stakeholders according to their power and interest. Third, build on this analysis to develop an engagement strategy.

Identify

Make a list of people and groups who could make a difference for the solution of the problem. Consider their ability to influence the outcome by mobilising resources. Resources may include funds, legal authority, or the ability to influence public opinion and mobilise the local community.

Analyse

In the second step, categorise the stakeholders on the list along the dimensions of power and interest. A stakeholder prioritisation matrix with two axes: power and interest make it possible to examine how powerful they are relative to the issue and how much it matters to them. For example, there could be elected officials with power over statutory stakeholders, but little demonstrated interest in water, and residents highly interested in solving water problems yet with little power over project delivery. But residents could have the ability to mobilise constituents, thereby raising the elected officials’ interest in exerting their influence over statutory stakeholders to address the problem.

Engage

Based on this analysis, develop a strategy for engaging stakeholders in each category. Think about the issues that might shift stakeholders’ relative positions to open the prospects of identifying solutions, co-benefits, and collaborations.

When identifying, analysing, and engaging stakeholders, it is important to reflect on the potential effects of this exercise on those stakeholders who may lack the ability to have their concerns heard. Power is distributed unequally across social groups. That is why it remains important to endeavour to be fair and inclusive when deciding which stakeholders to engage and how to engage them.

**WORKSHOP 1 – UNDERSTANDING**

The first workshop focuses on building a shared understanding of the problems using two principal methods: empathy building and participatory mapping.

Empathy building

Establishing empathy among stakeholders is a crucial first step to create rapport and group cohesion. Participants get to share their individual feelings and vantage points and begin to find common ground. Start the workshop with an empathy exercise of about 20 minutes. The exercise requires three post-it notes for each participant, pens, a wall for sticking the notes on, and a timekeeper. Participants get one minute to write one word on each post-it, the first three words that come to mind when they think of the issue more broadly. After one minute, participants are called, one by one, to come to the front, briefly state their name and organisation, and stick their three post-its to the wall and explain to the group what their three words mean. When all post-its are up facilitators group them into thematic clusters, asking the group if they agreed with the groupings and to suggest other possible patterns. When no new patterns are found, the facilitators highlight how many clusters of sentiment and association are shared among workshop participants and emphasise the importance of collaboration for solving difficult problems in the catchment. The exercise concludes with a coffee break where participants get the opportunity to chat informally.

Participatory mapping

Participatory mapping takes up the bulk of the workshop. It leverages both local and specialist knowledge among participants.

In pairs, mixing technical experts with residents and people that have not worked together before, participants record all the issues impacting water quality on their prompts. The prompts are printed maps, with plenty of white space (prepared in advance, format A4 or A3) and colour pens. When the group reconvenes, each pair briefly presents their map, the rest of the group are asked if they agree or disagree and when agreement is reached, the result is drawn on a large map in the middle of the room. The process is repeated with each pair being asked to add anything new to the shared map that had not been recorded before, making the shared map gain greater detail. After the final pair has presented, the facilitators summarise the results and ask if there are any other items to add.

The outcome of this exercise is a large-scale map that records everyone’s perspectives on the current state of the catchment, its problems, and responsibilities. (The map does not need to be geographically accurate. It can be text-heavy, include diagrams and represents a comprehensive record of the various issues afflicting the catchment including impacts and responsibilities.)

For this exercise to succeed, the facilitator and the recorder must work together the former ensuring the production of a comprehensive and detailed shared map, and the latter stimulating group discussion. The timekeeper ensures that each pair has enough time to present their input.

The workshop is documented through a photograph of the thematic clusters from the empathy exercise, and the detailed, comprehensive mapping of the state of the catchment, and the distribution of responsibilities. Alongside an audio recording of the group discussion this shared map forms the basis of an interim report.

**WORKSHOP 2 – SOLUTIONS**

Prior to the second workshop, a short interim report summarising the catchment problems is distributed to all participants to refresh their memory of the results.

As a month passes between the first and second workshops, the first step is to regain trust and re-introduce participants to each other, including any new participants that might have joined in the meantime. For new participants, repeat the empathy exercise from the previous workshop. Their responses on post-it notes can then be integrated with the thematic groupings of the first workshop. For previous participants write down one memorable thing that they took away from the first workshop. Presenting these responses gives the group an insight into the valuable outcomes to build on from the first workshop.

Prioritising problems

The participatory mapping in the first workshop produced many issues impacting on the problem in focus. Now, the task is to prioritise these problems and then select those that participants wish to tackle by co-designing solutions.

To begin, facilitators reintroduce the large map of issues co-produced in the first workshop and ask participants if they would like to add anything they have thought of in the meantime.

Next, participants work in teams of three for ten minutes to prioritise issues where change needs to occur. Priority issues are sorted into three timeframes: short-term (next year), medium-term (five years), and long-term (future). Issues also must be ranked by priority within each timeframe. As each team present their list of priority issues, facilitators collect and sort them into timeframes. After each presentation, the entire group is asked whether they agree with the ranking.

Co-designing solutions

After prioritising problems, it is time to co-design solutions by drawing on both technical expertise and local knowledge. Proposed solutions should be specific enough to be discussed and evaluated by the group but without much detail of implementation. It is crucial to mix technical and local knowledge; use a prompt that stimulates solution-oriented thinking and keep a time constraint.

Participants work in teams of four with each team including at least one technical expert and one local resident, preferrably with people they have not worked with before. The teams are given a prompt that asked them to select a priority problem from the whiteboard and imagine a solution.

Their solution must answer these questions:

* What is the priority problem you are tackling?
* What is the title of your solution?
* What is the solution?
* Who will lead implementation?
* How much will it cost?
* Who will pay for this?
* Why hasn’t it been done yet?
* What do we need to know to get it done?
* What do we need to do differently to get it done?

The timekeeper ensures that participants are aware of the 20 minutes limit. Facilitators ensure that participants understand the task and move on from problem exploration to the production of a brief presentation of their results in a timely fashion.

Evaluating solutions

The final activity comprises brief presentations of the solutions and their evaluation by all participants. Each team is given five minutes to present their solutions to the entire group, which is followed by questions and comments. Group discussion explores the fit and the feasibility of the proposed solutions, and articulate preferences for which solutions to implement.

Creating commitment

Finally, participants are asked to pick one action they commit to taking within the next working week to enable one or more of the proposed solutions to be realised. This activity gives participants a manageable task to take back into their individual contexts and encourages continued collaboration of workshop participants to create change in the catchment.