



Newspapers

Newspaper articles and Newspaper inserts are both efficient ways of distributing information. Articles are usually generated by a press release to local papers or by more personal contact with reporters. To be persuaded that the creation of a new forest or woodland plan is newsworthy and therefore merits space in their publication, reporters usually need to be convinced that the topic really interests the local community. Therefore you need to present the key aspects of interest to the Newspaper reporters and their readers. Meetings or workshops can be announced in this way. Presenting the public involvement process in its best light, providing evidence that people's opinions matter and that they can affect the outcome is a good approach. Press releases should be short – one to three paragraphs – and to the point. It is essential to include contact information to allow a reporter to follow up for more detail. Newspaper inserts can be simple leaflets or supplements offering more detailed information on the planning process. The information should be presented in a clear way and kept focused. Inserts and supplements can include mail-back response sheets and thus contribute to public involvement.

Resources and requirements

Skills

- Good writing skills are necessary to create a short, simple message that will engage editors and readers.
- Newspaper supplements may require expert journalistic skills to be effective.

Time

- Minimal time is needed for each release, but successful efforts to cultivate good relationships with news reporters and editors usually requires additional time.
- Press releases for weekly newspapers should be sent out about two weeks before an event.

Costs

- Newspaper inserts and supplements are normally free, but may require financial subsidy if extra copies are wanted for specific audiences.

Useful sources of information

Books

- Community planning handbook. Wates, N. ed. (2000). Earthscan Publications, London.

Level of engagement

INFORMING: ★★

CONSULTING:

INVOLVING:

PARTNERSHIP:

Strengths

- Articles by a reporter have the benefit of being presented by someone outside the forest or woodland management staff.
- News content may be viewed as unbiased and therefore efficient in inducing community members to participate in an involvement process.
- Announcements carried as news are free.
- Articles and inserts are useful ways of engaging with large populations at a low cost.
- Newspaper inserts and supplements are published and distributed very quickly.

Weaknesses

- Reporters control the actual content of an article and may not interpret your words correctly.
- The best way to avoid misinterpretation is often to write a short, simple article yourself and issue it as a press release or provide it as a submitted article.
- Timing of publication is not controllable.
- Expert graphic design skills may be required to produce an exclusive insert or supplement.

- Public Involvement Guide – A desk guide to Public Involvement. USDA Forest Service (1998). Northern Region, Public and Governmental Relations.
- Reference manual for public involvement. J. Barker et al. (1999). 2nd edn. Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham Health Authority, London.

Web

- The Guide to Effective Participation by David Wilcox: www.partnerships.org.uk
- The International Association for Public Participation: www.iap2.org



Interested locals discuss the plans for Cow Hill on display in Fort William Tourist office

Picture: The Write Image

Public come up with Cow Hill ideas

DO you want to travel by cable car up to a dry ski slope on the Cow Hill?
Or visit a restaurant on the 900 feet Cow Hill summit, reached via the back-track, by a pay-as-you-go minibus service?

Last week's fact-finding mission by the Forestry Commission, in connection with the Cow Hill behind Fort William, certainly provided plenty of food for thought for and from local people.

A series of questions were posed, with the main thrust of these being centred on these questions:

- How important is the Cow Hill to you?
- Why is it important to you?
- What do you like and dislike about the Cow Hill?
- What sort of improvements might you wish to see on the Cow Hill?

Those surveyed were asked to indicate on maps how they currently use the Cow Hill, and how they might wish to use it in the future.

Nearly 200 local people took part and provided information to the

Forestry Commission exercise produces interesting schemes

Forestry Commission at various locations around Fort William.

Teams of staff asked folk for their views in the Plantation, Upper Achintore, Claggan, Inverloch and Caol – and in Fort William High Street and Tourist Information Centre.

The participants had varied and wide-ranging views on what they thought could be delivered from the Cow Hill to benefit the local community.

These included the provision of a greater number of footpaths which could be used to link with current paths on the hill and beyond, as well as recognising future path development elsewhere in this area.

It was stressed that such paths and

shrubs and heather and, hopefully, a subsequent increase in wildlife.

Of those questioned, some considered that the Cow Hill is just fine the way it is and that development would detract from its existing natural state.

Others are looking to develop a cable car to a dry ski slope; or restaurant facilities at the summit, serviced by a pay-as-you-go minibus service.

So there is quite a debate for the community to engage in and this will be conducted over the next few months, via community councils, residents' associations, local schools, interest groups, and events to be held by the Forestry Commission.

A report on the information gathered during the two-day exercise will be produced shortly and will be made available through community meetings.

In the meantime, should any reader wish to make any suggestions about the Cow Hill and, indeed, any forestry-related matter, they can do so by contacting the Forestry Commission, at Lochaber Forest District, Torlandy, Fort William. Telephone (01397) 702184.

Questions stimulate reader's thoughts

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Opportunity for more information

Opportunity to get involved

A Newspaper article which informs, provides feedback and encourages further involvement in the planning process (Lochaber News, Lochaber Forest District).

This toolbox is designed to assist Forestry Commission staff when they are considering which tools they could use to involve the public in the forest and woodland planning process. For more information please visit the website at: www.forestry.gov.uk/toolbox