



Television and radio

Television (TV) and radio can be used for public involvement in different ways, for instance, in the form of interviews or participatory programmes. The main aim is to inform the wider public about the planning process and possibly to encourage audience response. Participatory programmes explore a particular topic and give the public (studio and viewing/listening audience) an opportunity to comment on it. Staff record comments and/or respond to questions raised by the audience. This two-way communication is also called interactive TV. Most interactive TV enables viewers to respond by telephone, but more sophisticated technology is becoming available that allows participants to respond directly to issues seen/heard in the programme. When seeking space in the media, the newsworthiness of the subjects should be high. When actually being interviewed by a reporter or when attending a participatory programme, it is essential to explain the subject matter in plain English and avoid professional expressions and jargon. It is good practice to ask beforehand what topics the interviewer is going to cover and to be prepared for additional questions if you are aware of potentially controversial issues. If visual material is used in the programme, it should be clear and simple.

Resources and requirements

Skills

- Good communication and presentation skills are necessary.
- Interactive programs need facilitators.

Equipment

- Good clear visual material is useful in TV to make the ideas easily understandable.

Time

- Arrangements for television appearances should be made several weeks or months in advance.
- Press releases for radio stations should be sent out about two weeks before an event.

Useful sources of information

Books

- Participatory approach to natural resource management: a guide book. T. Loikkanen (1999). Forest and Park Service, Finland.
- Public Involvement Guide – A desk guide to Public Involvement. USDA Forest Service (1998). Northern Region, Public and Governmental Relations.

Level of engagement

INFORMING: ★★

CONSULTING:

INVOLVING:

PARTNERSHIP:

Strengths

- People who would not normally attend other events may be reached.
- Television reaches a large public and a wide geographic area.
- Interactive TV enables people to absorb large amounts of information quickly and respond straight away.

Weaknesses

- TV is an expensive medium and therefore extensive advance planning is required.
- Assessing the impact on the audience can be difficult.
- Poor media appearances can have an adverse effect on the public's views about the planning organisation.
- Input from interactive TV is not statistically representative.

Web

- The Guide to Effective Participation by David Wilcox: www.partnerships.org.uk
- The International Association for Public Participation: www.iap2.org
- Public involvement techniques for transportation decision-making by United States Department of Transportation: www.fhwa.dot.gov/reports/pittd/interv.htm

Training

- Training in customer care and service standards will be important to the success of this method. Check for internal or external providers.'



Public involvement promoted through local television.

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