

CONFLICT OR CONSENSUS:

There now exists an ever increasing number of examples that show a direct comparison between 'decide/announce/defend', conflict-based approaches to decision making & advancing environmental initiatives and approaches based on "Involve/Agree/Implement", consensus-based approaches to decision making & collaborative working.

The comparisons show clearly the considerable advantages of collaborative approaches in terms of speed, resources, end quality, capacity building and so forth.

The chart below offers short 'cameos' of projects, in each case with a direct comparison of approaches taken. As a matter of courtesy, the projects are anonymous.

DECIDE/ANNOUNCE/DEFEND MODEL	INVOLVE/AGREE/IMPLEMENT (Collaborative Model)
City council A, aiming to expand its city centre controlled parking zone, commissioned consultants who then presented their results as a fair accompli. Residents and businesses totally rejected the proposals and the plan were scrapped.	The adjacent council B wanted to expand its parking zone, initiated up-front and coherent community and stakeholder involvement and ended up with a fully agreed scheme, implemented only 10 months later.
Several Coastal Management Plans for protected areas were commissioned in the 1990s. Most plans were developed totally in-house, failed to gain stakeholder support and went almost nowhere in practice.	In another case a thorough and wide-ranging stakeholder dialogue was established, an agreed plan emerged and, even before it was formally published, a medley of local collaborative initiatives were underway.
All AONB teams have struggled with conflict and dissent on issues around access to the countryside. Most early plans failed to address the issue or included policies that were eventually not implemented.	In another case, access officers and representatives of ramblers, farmers, CPRE and horse riders worked together to literally write agreed policies, now supported through to implementation
Many local planning authorities spent upwards of £500,000 each on their plan Inquiries, mostly to pay for barristers. It was common for key policies to change as a result of this lengthy process.	In authority C, the team developed a complex collaborative process that involved the potential key objectors from the outset and reached agreement on many aspects. The result was a dramatic reduction in the number of objections and significant reduction in the cost and time of the Inquiry.
In authority D a supermarket company tried for several years to drive a proposal through against the wishes of the community, the planning authority and the Council as a whole – all without success and at considerable cost to all involved	In authority E a different supermarket company and local planning authority shared cost and commitment to an engagement process that so speeded progress towards an agreed solution and an acceptable application that the company saved many months interest charges – which it contributed to the community in the form of a high quality local facility.
In authority F a small community (of barely 350 people) raised the largest objection to their area's local plan because it proposed 26 new houses for their village.	Further work on a Village Design Statement with the village community generated an agreed plan for the village that included an additional 42 houses!
In an area of some 500 houses, 17 th century stone mines close below the surface threatened extremely damaging subsidence.	A new team was brought in, rebuilt confidence in all parties, brought them together and helped to generate a new,

<p>The authority attempted to impose a solution to infill the mines and generated vigorous protest and resistance.</p>	<p>multi-party group and an agreed way forward – now fully funded by the government.</p>
<p>Several attempts have been made in recent years to advance large scale town expansion projects. Many were developed traditionally by consultants, announced once proposals were complete, resisted by local people and then scrapped.</p>	<p>Authority G, working with two government agencies, sought to develop proposals to almost double a 'Primary Urban Area'. The consultant team took a collaborative approach from day one and, when needing to check the ambition with stakeholders, ran a workshop at which all involved opted to support the highest possible targets for jobs and houses.</p>
<p>Govt set targets for wind power in the UK. Lots of adhoc, on-shore developments are proposed by developers in response. Nearly all are objected to on various grounds.</p>	<p>Govt looks longer term and sees the huge potential for off-shore wind farms. Working with a collaborative approach to involving all key stakeholders at a national level, the ground work is laid for selling permits for off-shore wind farm developments. So far, no major objections have made the news.</p>
<p>Over 30 years of open "warfare" between pro and anti nuclear groups, meant there had never been any dialogue between them. The nuclear industry had a strategy for how the UK's nuclear power stations should be decommissioned at the end of their life. This was not shared or agreed by national interest groups and stakeholders.</p>	<p>Reality bites, many of the UK nuclear reactors are over 30 years old and at the end of their design life. The nuclear industry and UK govt. realize they have to gain some form of agreement or acknowledgement for their approach to decommissioning. The main anti nuclear groups have to decide to contribute their ideas or stay outside "the door" while the industry carries on on their path. Dialogue starts, lasts some 4 years and reaches broad / outline agreements. Not everyone is totally happy but 30 years of "warfare" is replaced by disagreements over "details" and timing.</p>
<p>30 years of dispute over the environmental & health effects of electromagnetic fields from overhead power lines and electrical appliances & installations. UK govt & industry in total denial and refusal to talk to "the other side"</p>	<p>2004. Tentative first steps to starting a dialogue with all main parties/stakeholders involved. 2005 the process gets UK govt. "approval" and semi-formal status with an aim to reach a consensus/agreement on advice to govt. for precautionary approaches/policies to adopt.</p>
<p>Proposal to alleviate annual flooding in a major historical UK city proposed. Supported by authority A but opposed by authorities B, C, D, E, F and many agencies & communities. Nothing gets done for 6 years, flooding happens almost every year and huge expense to pump the water.</p>	<p>Authority A finally realizes they can't push it through. Dialogue process initiated with all stakeholders involved. 6 months later all parties agree on a revised scheme. Scheme gets govt. approval and 1 year later is constructed at a cost of some £11m.</p>