Hatfield Forest

A Best Practice and Awar d Winning Case Study of Stakeholder Participation

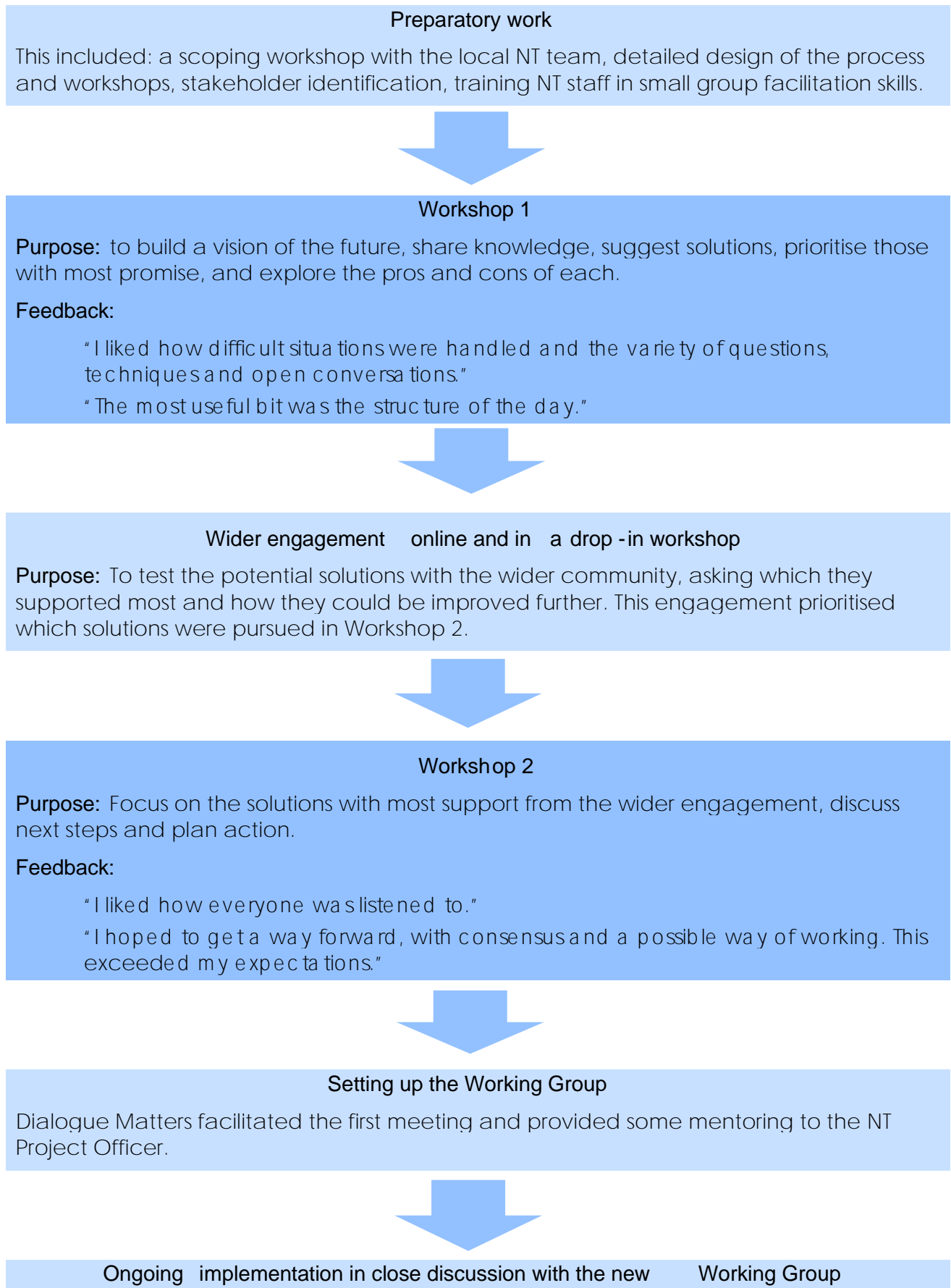Contents

1 Introduction and overview

The focus of this engagement was to resolve highly contentious issues around recreation, access and sensitive habitats at Hatfield Fore

1.3 Outline of the process

Working closely with the NT, DM designed and planned the following process. The two main workshops scored an average 8/10 from participants, which is high in a context of tension.

Preparatory work

This included: a scoping workshop with the local NT team, detailed design of the process and workshops, stakeholder identification, training NT staff in small group facilitation skills.

Workshop 1

Purpose: to build a vision of the future, share knowledge, suggest solutions, prioritise those with most promise, and explore the pros and cons of each.

Feedback:

"I liked how difficult situations were handled and the variety of questions, techniques and open conversations."

"The most useful bit was the structure of the day."

Wider engagement   online and in   a drop -in workshop

Purpose: To test the potential solutions with the wider community, asking which they supported most and how they could be improved further. This engagement prioritised which solutions were pursued in Workshop 2.

Workshop 2

Purpose: Focus on the solutions with most support from the wider engagement, discuss next steps and plan action.

Feedback:

"I liked how everyone was listened to."

"I hoped to get a way forward, with consensus and a possible way of working. This exceeded my expectations."

Setting up the Working Group

Dialogue Matters facilitated the first meeting and provided some mentoring to the NT Project Officer.

Ongoing   implementation in close discussion with the new   Working Group

2.3 Constructive Dialogue

Constructive Dialogue (CD) is a best practice approach to participation. Instead of focusing on problems and issues, which leaves people discouraged, the focus in CD is on what is working and what more needs to happen. This fosters a positive view and a greater willingness to get involved and make a difference. CD doesn't avoid issues, but enables people to discuss them with a positive, solutions-focused mind-set. It also avoids triggering personal psychological barriers.

Problem solving/deficit based	Strengths based
Frustration	Motivated
Efforts not valued	Efforts valued
Environment is complex and difficult = a problem	Looking after the environment has many benefits and is do-able
Feeling overwhelmed	Believe in own capacity and agency to make a difference
Risk averse	Fosters innovation
Disowning – 'it's not our problem'	Willing to get involved and make a difference
No momentum or resistance to delivery	Momentum for delivery

2.4 Embedding   ongoing participation

A critique of participation is that people can be empowered to share decision-making over what needs to happen, but once that process is concluded, the power reverts back to the usual decision makers. Best practice is to find ways to embed participation at the implementation stage too. In line with this, in the last workshop DM facilitated the Hatfield NT team and other stakeholders to discuss how best to do this. The following was agreed:

> To set up a new Working Group to act as a sounding board and work with the National Trust on detailed implementation of agreed actions.

> To set up a wider forum to meet a few times a year. This will create a network of champions and supporters of the forest who can come together to learn about the forest and each other's interests, provide walks and talks to explain the sensitivity of the site, help with practical tasks, act as informal 'wardens' drawing matters of concern to the National Trust local team, and maybe carry out citizen science.

> For there to be regular updates with those who took part in the Consensus Process so they know what is going on and can contribute further if appropriate.

> The Working Group and Project Officer are also now wondering about bringing all the stakeholders who took part in the main process back together to review progress and plan next steps.

3 Roles and responsibilities   in th is process

3.1 Role of Dialogue Matters

The role of Dialogue Matters was to function as a neutral third party and:

Scope the situation

Contact key protagonists in advance to put them at ease, invite them to engage in the process in a constructive way, and assure them they were going to have real influence

Design the process and ensure that each element built on what had gone before and fed directly into the next stage without being filtered or edited by the host organisation

Design all elements including questions and techniques

4 Tailoring the process to the situation

4.1 Stakeholder identificat   ion

After a thorough scoping of the context, Dialogue Matters proposed a balanced invitation list ensuring it was not biased to any particular interest. The list included the following:

stakeholders to allay any fears and discuss the process. Based on what DM found, they ensured that:

Background briefing and presentations used everyday language

Technical terms used by professional stakeholders (e.g. SSSI) were explained in a glossary

5 Behind the scenes keys to success

This section is about the keys to success that played out within the National Trust local team and between the NT team and Dialogue Matters (DM). The quotes are the Project Officer's (PO's) comments during the review.

The review was carried out a year after the main consensus process finished. The PO and DM team carried out the review by considering what worked well and what we would do differently at each of three stages:

5.1.3 Understanding it doesn't mean 'selling out'

A key concern of all organisations when they consider this way of working is that it will result in weak compromise and '

adopters, early majority, late majority and laggards[2]. The PO recognised that as a pioneer she needed to be wise, and work out who at head office could support her and help her smooth the way through some of the internal procedures. Particularly those not yet adapted to this new way of working: *"Relationships are really crucial internally to support the process and I didn't always know who was the best person to speak to – I had to work this out under the pressure of a live process - next time I will work this out more strategically and I am already having conversations with our Participation team at Head Office"*.

5.1.7 Getting value for money

Investing precious funds for conservation into a Consensus Building process is rightly challenged. The PO found *" a lot of reassurance was needed that the money was being well spent and that it would benefit and help everyone find a way forward – without this we were at an impasse with the condition of the forest deteriorating and local people getting more angry"*.

The PO also needed to explain what an independent third party actually does, and why the National Trust local team would not be accepted by local people if they tried to take on that role themselves. *" It was important to get the team to understand that when this is the situation, the perception is the reality – whether it is factually true or not"*.

One area of learning was the length of the day workshops. Day workshops are always demanding on participants but those there in a professional capacity are at least accustomed to working days. Some of the people who were there for the local community

would be facilitated to "

There were also strong characters who later acknowledged that they were trying to throw the workshop off track. But the design and facilitation mitigated this.

The PO had

ater)

Session 3: Considering solutions

Q Consider the solutions and select the ones that are worth more in depth consideration

Q Select the one you most want to talk about

Developing ideas further

Q What do we know about this (facts and figures)?
Q What are the benefits?
Q What are the challenges and disbenefits?
Q When and where would it work well?
Q When and where would it not work?
Q What do you want to know about this idea to consider it further?

At this stage w

Shaping the future of Hatfield Forest together
Workshop 2 February 8 th 2017

The morni ng focuses on specific solutions proposed by participants at the first workshop and tested through wider engagement.

The afternoon focuses on enhanced communication and involvement

| 09:30 | Registration, coffee and tea will be available |

10.00   Welcome

Facilitator's introduction   Lucy Armitage: Dialogue Matters

Why we need your involvement   Ade Clarke: National Trust

Q   Who wants to help make it happen?

	Brief break whilst the spaces are prepared for the next session

Session 4: New working group/sounding board/implementation group

Q   What could be their main functions?
Q   How often and when could it meet?
Q   What makes for successful meetings that are constructive and good to be part of?
Q   What 'guidance for working together' would help the group achieve this?
Q   If there were 12 places, what interest or organisation should have a place for a balanced group? (Suggest names too if you can)