

Stakeholder communication improvements in a public infrastructure project

Project type: Infrastructure

Location: London

RICS/APM stakeholder principles: Communicate; Consult early, and often; Remember, they're only human; Plan it!; Relationships are key; Simple, but not easy; Just part of managing risk; Compromise; Understand what success is; Take responsibility

Stakeholder terms: Stakeholder expectations, communication

Abstract

A case study focusing on the importance of early engagement and continual consultation in a potentially controversial large public infrastructure project, to mitigate disruption, delay and adverse publicity.

Background

The effectiveness of this approach was demonstrated by the recent commissioning of a major new piece of railway infrastructure in London. The overall scheme had been the subject of consultation and engagement over several years to win 'hearts and minds' culminating in a public enquiry which resulted in the scheme being authorised under the Transport and Works Act 1992. However, elements of the scheme were still controversial, including the demolition and reconstruction of a large Victorian railway bridge in East London.

The issues

The controversial demolition and reconstruction of the Victorian railway bridge would be a very noisy and disruptive process requiring a 10 day 'possession' of the railway. In order to avoid adverse publicity and reputational risk of the client, mitigating steps would need to be taken with stakeholder engagement to address valid concerns. Steps were therefore taken to identify those most affected by the works and engage with them over concerns and possible mitigations through a variety of avenues.

The challenges

The challenges are identified under 'The issues'.

The solution

Firstly early engagement with the local authority was carried out, to allow them to comment on the environmental criteria and the mitigation measures being proposed. An agreed program of consultation and engagement with the local community stakeholders (residents and business) was carried out over the six month period prior to the works providing the opportunity for them to comment on the proposals and identify any specific issues that needed to be addressed by the project. This included a consultation leaflet, group meetings with community bodies, face-to-face meetings with individual residents and a noise and vibration model was created to allow individual residents to appreciate the levels they would experience to determine if the mitigation proposals were adequate for their individual needs.

The benefits

The works were successfully carried out with no disruption or delay, and no adverse publicity. This demonstrated the success of the policy of stakeholder engagement and communication that was adopted.

The learning points

Extensive, thorough, early engagement with the community and council through a variety of methods prior to large-scale projects mitigates local disruptions and the potential of reputation damage to the client.

This case study was written by the APM Stakeholder Engagement Focus Group.

- *For more information on the group or stakeholder engagement, [click here](#).*