

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Before, during and after:

How are the demands of futures projects different?

Defra Horizon Scanning and Futures

Social Research Association - 7 July 2009

- **Explore lessons learned**
- **Demystify futures research**
- **Rebuild relationships and networks**
- **Rebuild Defra's credibility with the futures community**

- **Collaborate on work and documentation**
- **Re-use raw materials and approaches**
- **Communicate constantly and iteratively**
- **Add narrative to Defra Futures toolkit**
- **Pay attention to networks**
- **Value visible and invisible, formal and informal**

Create a living document



Narrative research method

- 1 hour interviews, timeline
- 10 minute interviews, questions
- 20 minute interviews, vignettes
- Event week, pinboards
- Narrative database, themed enquiry
- Essays, flowerbed.....pause....
- Wiki, workwheel, sharepoint.....



One-to-one interviews

Confidential one-hour sessions with key players

- **To understand the history and construct a timeline**
- **To provide some catharsis**
- **To start to build momentum**

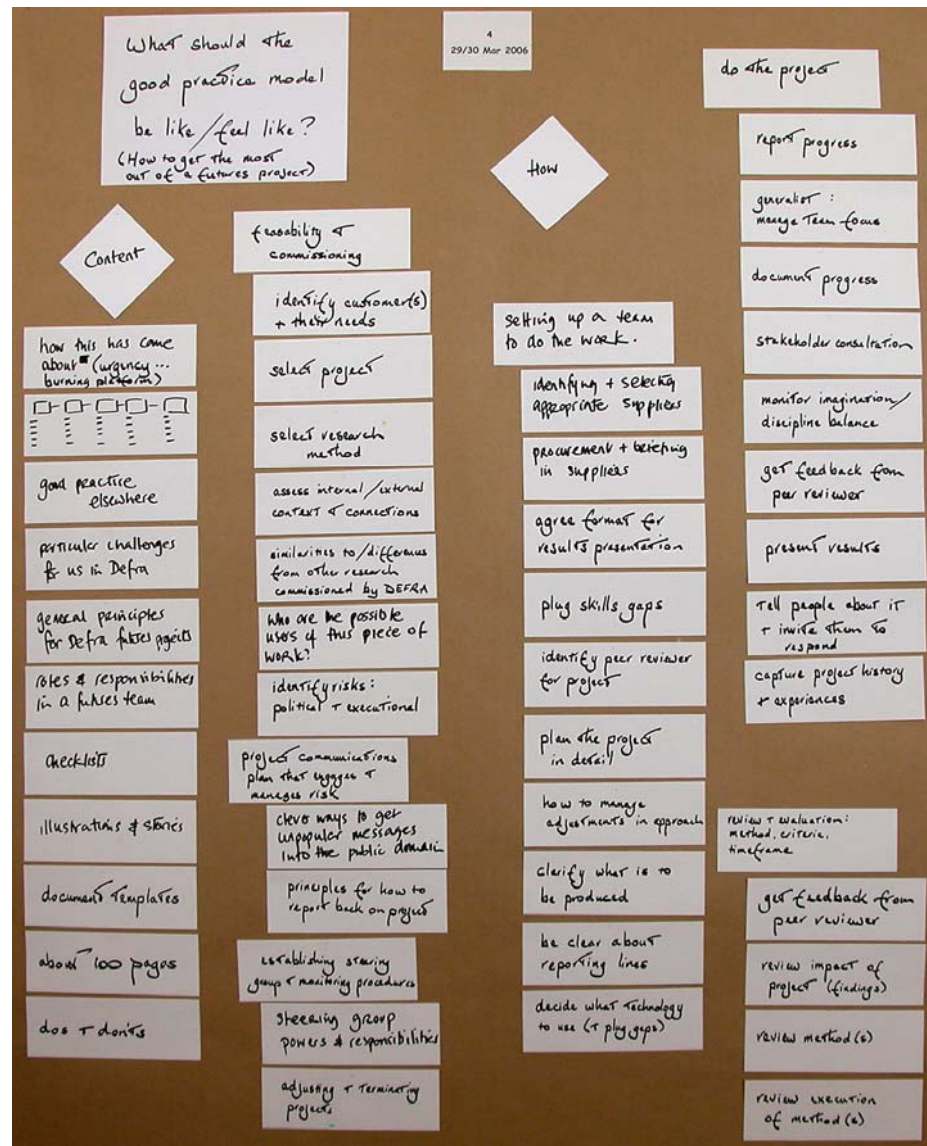
10-minute phone interviews

Teams of two

- **What questions should we ask?**
- **Who should we be asking?**
- **Would you like to participate in the project?**



Sense making



20-minute interviews

With Defra project managers

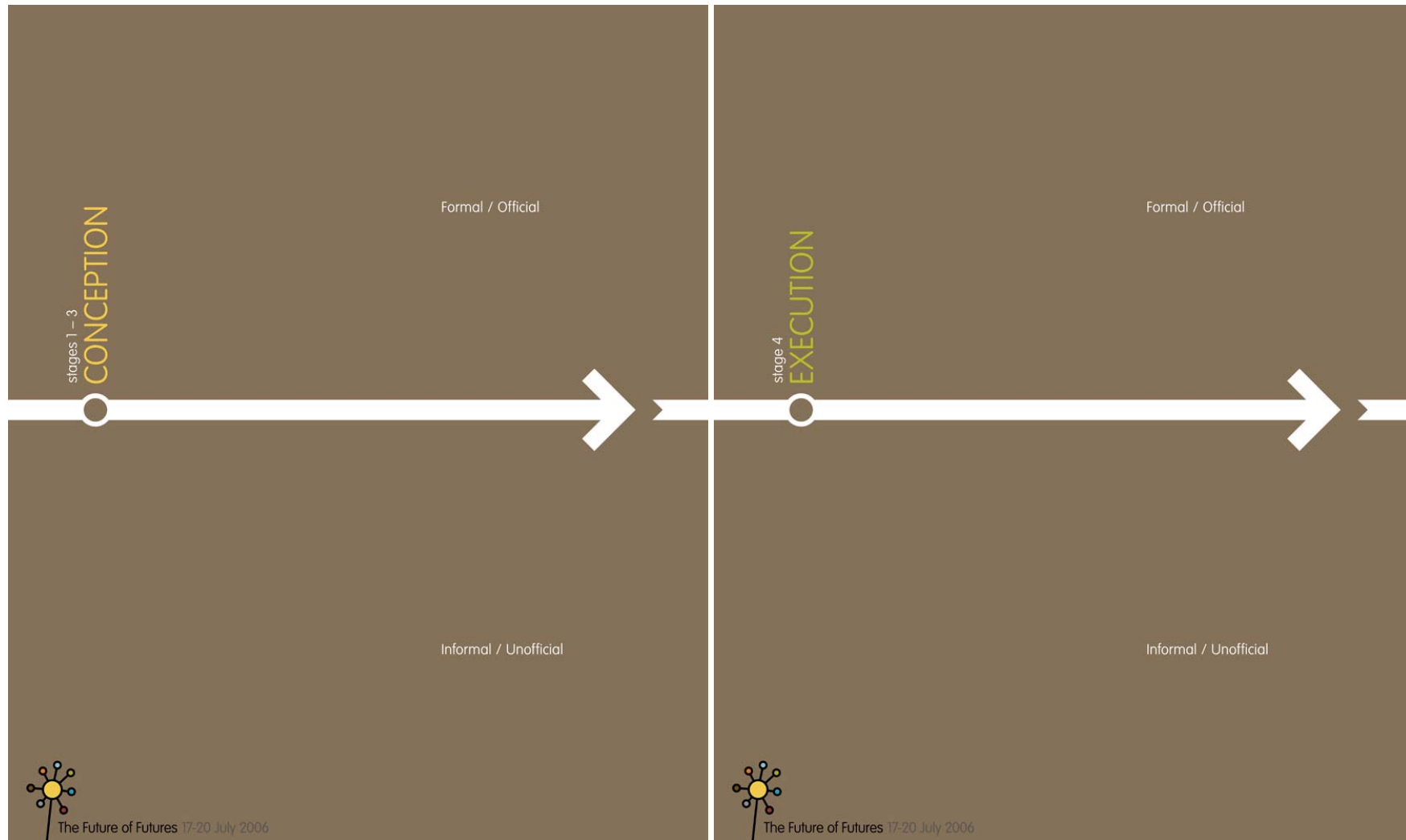
- To explore half a dozen representative projects
- To focus on key moments – turning points
- To provide vignettes/texture



- **Futures vs more established approaches to research**
- **Established vs experimental methods**
- **Stakeholder engagement**
- **Steering groups and governance**
- **Interdisciplinary teams**
- **Issues around language**
- **Policy makers – give and take**
- **How to handle unpalatable/controversial scenarios**

- **Introduction**
- **Experience sharing (groups)**
- **Select and explore one experience**
- **Story telling to plenary; writing the morals**
- **Morals and what they reveal**
- **Advice writing and suggestions**
- **Presenting back suggestions**
- **The bigger questions**
- **Close and what next**

Event Week pinboards



Looking back at looking forwards

Next steps for Horizon Scanning and Futures

Contents of this document

1. Introduction
2. Distinctive qualities of futures work
3. Growing a suitable methodology
4. Involving & empowering critics
5. Governance & Steering Groups
6. Multidisciplinarity
7. Language and misunderstanding
8. Ownership and relevance
9. Long term impact
10. Requirements for success

A1. Glossary of futures methods

A2. Table of roles



After five years of building possible futures and analysing their implications, Defra's Horizon Scanning and Futures programme decided that it was time to look backwards for a while.

The programme entered a year-long period of review and consolidation and commissioned Sparknow, a pioneer in the use of narrative techniques to capture knowledge, to help it review the work thus far and draw out the lessons to be learned.

Through a series of events, interviews, discussions and exercises we've gathered countless experiences and insights that tell us how the HSF programme has been run in the past and how our 'critical friends' think it should be run in the future.

The lessons we've found are presented in a big folder, of which this is the electronic version. Each page is a frank and readable summary of our findings on a core 'sticky' question identified by our stakeholders. They range from specific governance issues like steering group composition to broad cultural challenges like the effective communication of difficult findings.

Wrapped around them, the folder itself also functions as a wallchart, overview and planning tool. It lays out the project lifecycle and places on it the collected advice and hard-won experience of the people who carried out Defra's early futures projects.

Having reviewed and understood our history, it is now time for the HSF programme

to look forwards again. We have worked hard to learn from these lessons and build a strategy for the future programme that will engage and support the Defra community, build on previous successes, learn from previous mistakes and incorporate the views of our stakeholders at every step on the way.

Our aim is to clear the murk that surrounds the subject of futures work. We want to strip away the myth, mystery and bunkum around the subject, create an effective dialogue and provide Defra with a clear and easily understood set of processes and methodologies. Futures research is a powerful tool that needs to be understood.

From now on we are going to work in three ways: continuous horizon scanning, occasional large-scale futures investigations and systematic capacity-building within the department.

Horizon scanning is a 'knowledge radar' that scans for clues and suggestions at the outer periphery of what is known and understood and gives advance warning of the opportunities and threats that lie just out of sight. We are setting up a continuous scanning function to spot emerging issues and bring them to Defra's attention.

The scan will look at technology and science in its broadest sense, including the social sciences, economics, political science and the natural sciences.

Senior scientists will use the scan to locate emerging issues of particular importance to our overall strategy, and these will become the focus of cross-cutting futures projects designed to provide detailed evidence and guidance for Defra's policy makers.

The unit will continue to be a very small one, but we will also help policy teams to undertake their own futures work. We will help people to find the right expert knowledge and skills, provide training, promote technical understanding of the various futures methodologies through our website, publish models of good practice and establish governance guidelines.

We will provide the analytical capability to translate emerging issues into useful forms. We will also offer a number of communication services including seminars on futures projects, expert workshops and horizon scanning newsletters highlighting science and technology issues.

By combining incisive cross-departmental futures projects with a broad increase in futures capacity among policy teams, we aim to help Defra to be anticipatory, to manage risk and exploit opportunity and to be an efficient, proactive organisation able to build robust and resilient policy.

Fiona Lickorish and Jessica Ellis,
Department, date

HSF Toolkit

- Before you start
- Setting up
- Steering and managing
- Finishing and starting

Home » Getting it done »

Managing stakeholders & contributors

[view](#) | [edit](#) | [info](#) | [history](#) | [comments](#) | [attachments](#)

Stakeholders is a muddled word, in danger of meaning everything and nothing . There's probably little to add to the thorough [guidance](#) already available to Defra policy makers, and many have their own professional training and experience to draw on too. A handful of pointers particular to foresight work follow. It's worth saying that several past Defra projects have regretted the opportunity lost through not having the time, planning, resources or wit to engage with stakeholders more subtly and thoroughly over the course of the project. Even with a tiny, largely solo, project it's wise to spend a little time at regular intervals on how best to engage stakeholders and contributors well, without weighing the work down. You'll want them there for the long haul, and that may take a little patient work.

Labelling

Careful mapping, categorisation and monitoring of stakeholder networks may matter more with this kind of work. The politics can be

“ I always get put off by the expression because stakeholders comprise so many different categories of people and it is important to think about who you classify as stakeholders... Whenever I see stakeholder consultation, I always put a question mark and say, 'Who?'



Particularly within Defra, different policy areas refer to stakeholders in different ways. Even within industry stakeholders, you have farmers as deliverers on the ground, but they actually take products from other industries so they could be two industry stakeholder groups. It is all about being clear about your labelling. (Defra social scientist)

[Edit notes](#)



Make sure you get the right people in the room, at the right time, in a mood to be useful. What are their WIFMs (What's In It For Me?)?



And don't forget to draw on the experience, advice and

- **Small things can make a big difference**
- **The more organisations, the more complication**
- **Budgeting for communication as well as research**
- **Process vs product – where does the value lie?**
- **Imaginative precision vs vagueness**

What we aim do....

“The systematic examination of potential threats, opportunities and likely future developments which are at the margins of current thinking and planning. Futures research may explore novel and unexpected issues, as well as persistent problems or trends. Overall, it is intended to improve the robustness of Defra’s policies, strategies and evidence base.”

Defra, 2002

DEFRA HORIZON SCANNING AND FUTURES



Defra has had a programme of futures work since 2002

Horizon Scanning and futures techniques are used by a number of large organisations – including Defra – to enhance their ability to operate, survive and grow from strength to strength into the future

Our aim is to enable colleagues to deliver policy and strategy within Defra in 4 ways:

- An horizon scanning function**
- An ability to analyse and synthesise scanning outputs**
- Procuring and managing larger futures research projects**
- Upskilling policy & strategy colleagues in futures techniques & processes**

Wherever possible we aim to work in partnership with colleagues across Defra, its Delivery Network and beyond

Defra's HSF project was developed in 2002 as a direct response to:

- **The Govt. response to the BSE inquiry**
- **The OST Guidelines 2002**
- **The Cabinet Office Strategy Unit's report on risk & uncertainty**
- **HMT interest in the concept to HSF as a priority area for Defra spend**

Between 2002–2005 the project completed 15 pieces of research in areas ranging from:

- **'Alternative Future Scenarios for Marine Ecosystems'**
- **an analysis of food chain trends, and**
- **'A new agenda for Biosecurity'.**

In 2006 the team consulted with stakeholders to learn lessons and to develop models of good practice for the new project.

We are now rolling out a new project consisting of the 4 workstreams our stakeholders said were essential requirements for the future

A process of continual discovery – growing a suitable methodology

Key Aspects

- **Choose your method carefully**
- **If you don't know which to choose – ask, don't dictate**
- **Don't get bogged down in the 'tyranny of rigour'.**
- **One method may not be enough**



Keeping people interested – involving and empowering critics

Key Aspects

- **Try out new techniques which allow boldness and honesty**
- **You will need time, effort and facilitative flair**
- **Stakeholders are needed during the whole life of the project, not just at the end.**
- **Peer review as early as possible**



Stay on track – good governance and the role of the steering group

Key Aspects

- **Do you really need a steering group?**
- **Steering groups should challenge, reassure, give feedback and critique**
- **Get the right people in the right roles**
- **Take the time for the group to ‘gel’**
- **Don’t let governance needs overpower the ‘real’ work.**



A happy combination? – power and potential in multi-disciplinarity

Key Aspects

- **Start with the ‘right’ triangle**
- **Accept and plan for discord and misunderstanding**
- **Draw strength from disagreement and conflict which encourages robust, friendly argument**
- **Step out of safe zones and find where disciplines overlap**



Found in translation – language, misunderstanding and discovery

Key Aspects

- **Give time and space for understanding**
- **Keep an open mind about futurist's more exotic terminology**
- **Promote a gradual process of misunderstanding, challenge and explanation**
- **Foster any shared, 'project' language that emerges**



The policy-making merry-go-round – the search for ownership and relevance

Key Aspects

- **Ensure a policy need and head towards a policy solution**
- **Accept the limitations of futures research, but also its efficiencies of advanced warning**
- **Make it relevant to build appetite**
- **Strip away the mystique**



Will it fly? – making a long term difference

Key Aspects

- **The end is just the beginning**
- **After asking ‘what if’ remember to ask ‘so what’ or ‘so what now?’**
- **Accept that most of the impacts will be hidden & some completely redundant...**
- **...and some impacts may turn up in the most unlikely places.**



The uses of discomfort – requirements of a successful futures project

Key Aspects

- **The risk of failure is high & so it should be**
- **Give it time**
- **Build an appetite for discomfort**
- **Be prepared to challenge & be challenged when you try to shift the ‘world view’ of others**



“Organizations that have clear expectations about the future are in a far better position to decide on critical issues effectively and to ensure that the strategies and policies they choose serve them well, not only in the present, but also in the intermediate and long-term.”
Siemens,

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Key Sources: Looking back at looking forwards
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