

# ***Organisational Information Behaviour in the Public Consultation Process in Scotland***

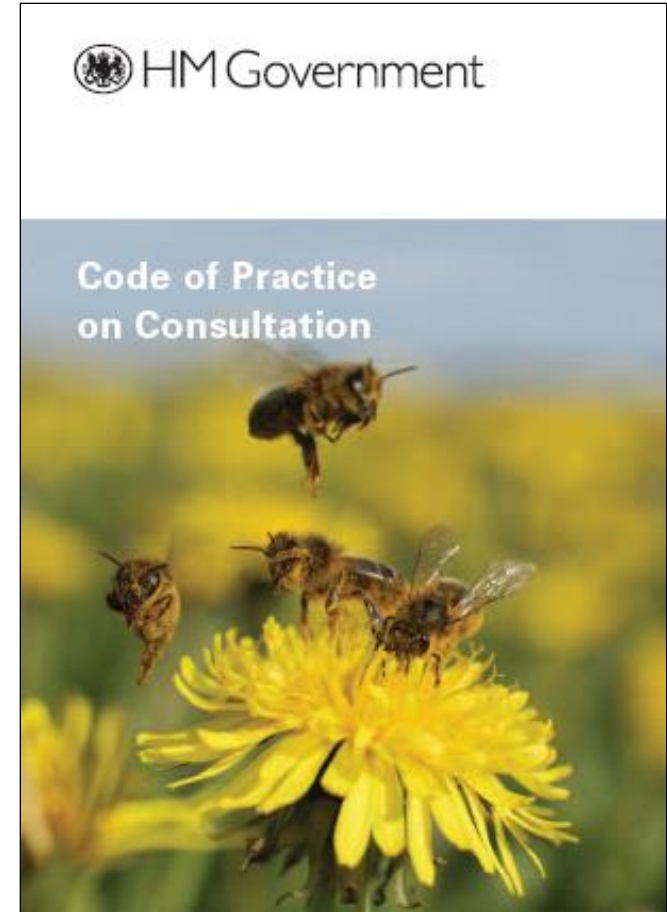
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# Drivers of Increased Consultation Include:-

- **Previous Labour Government's *Modernising Government* agenda, 1999-**
- **Devolution: e.g. Scottish Parliament and Scottish Government, 1999-**

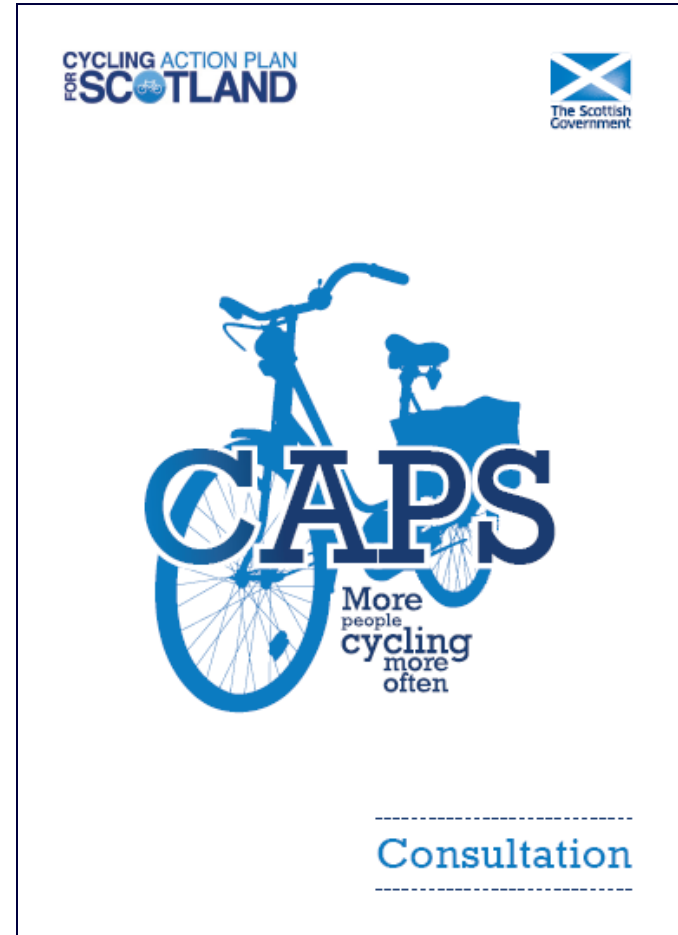


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# Consultation Methods

- **Traditionally :-**
  - **Written consultation**
- **Increasingly supplemented with additional methods, such as:-**
  - **Public meetings;**
  - **Workshops;**
  - **Seminars;**
  - **Focus groups;**
  - **Citizens' panels, etc.**



# Responses to Consultations

- **Most attract modest numbers of responses (i.e. 50-60)**
- **But some attract great interest, e.g.**
  - **Smoking in Public Places (2004) 53,474**
  - **Climate Change Bill (2008) 21,046**



# **ESRC Project: 'The Mobilisation of Organised Interests in Policy Making' (Halpin & Baxter)**

- **Conducted between October 2006 and January 2009**
- **Recorded over 185,000 written responses, from almost 19,000 groups and organisations (and thousands of individual citizens), to almost 1,700 Scottish Government consultation exercises, from 1982 to May 2007.**
- **Questionnaire survey of 469 non-governmental organisations, identified as responding to at least one consultation in the post-devolution period.**



# Organisational Information Behaviour Study

## Aim

- **To explore the information behaviour of representative groups in responding to Scottish Government consultations.**

## Objectives

**To investigate:-**

- 1) How groups find out about relevant consultations to which they might wish to contribute;**
- 2) How they go about gathering information in preparation for submitting a response; and**
- 3) How they find out about the results of consultations to which they have contributed.**



# Methodology

- **Sample drawn from over 200 ‘volunteer’ organisations responding to the earlier postal survey;**
- **Semi-structured telephone interviews with individuals responsible for preparing/coordinating consultation responses;**
- **52 interviews conducted, August to November 2009;**
- **A further two organisations responded by email.**



# Sample Organisation 'Type'

Organisation 'type'	Sample		Population	
	No.	%	No.	%
Citizen group	33	61.1	2,129	51.1
Professional association	8	14.8	607	14.6
Collective business group	8	14.8	767	18.4
Service charity	4	7.4	621	14.9
Trade union	1	1.9	44	1.1
<b>Totals</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>4,168</b>	<b>100</b>





# Political and Policy Engagement

- **43 (80%) of the sample organisations described themselves as politically engaged, but with no political party affiliations;**
- **49 (91%) aim to influence or affect public policy in some way;**
- **14 (26%) employ a full-time or part-time policy officer;**
- **14 (26%) were members of government-led fora.**



# Sources of Policy and Consultation Information

Information source	General policy		Consultations		
	No.	%	Information source	No.	%
Directly from government and parliamentary sources	26	48	Direct invitation via distribution lists	47	87
			<i>seConsult</i> email alerts	25	46
			Pre-consultation involvement	8	15
Monitoring government and parliamentary websites	5	9	Monitoring Scottish Government website	15	28
Other groups, networks and umbrella bodies	36	67	Other groups, networks and umbrella bodies	18	33
Media	17	31	Media	1	2



# Direct Invitations via Distribution Lists

## CONSULTEES

Aberdeen City Council  
Aberdeenshire Council  
Adhesive Tape Manufacturers Association  
Advisor to Soil Association  
Advisory Committee on Consumer Products and the Environment  
AEA Energy & Environment  
Aggregate Industries UK  
Agricultural Engineers Association  
Agricultural Industries Confederation  
Agricultural Industries Commission  
Aluminium Finishing Association  
Angus Council  
Argyll & Bute Council  
Asbestos Information Centre  
Associated Parliamentary Renewable and Sustainable Energy Group  
Association for the Conservation of Energy  
Association for Instrumentation, Control, Automation  
Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland  
Association of Electricity Producers  
Association of Environmental Consultancies  
Association of Manufacturers of Domestic Appliances  
Association of Manufacturers of Domestic Electrical Appliances  
Association of Master Upholsterers  
Association of National Park Authorities  
Association of Port Health Authorities  
Association of Private Crematoria & Cemeteries  
Association of Private Pet Crematoria  
Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland  
Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry  
Association of Train Operating Companies  
Aviation Environment Federation  
BIFFA Waste Services Ltd  
Blue Circle  
BOC Industrial  
British Aerosol Manufacturers Association  
British Aggregates Association  
British Aerosol Manufacturers Association  
British Air Transport Association  
British Association for Bio-Fuels and Oils  
British Association for the Advancement of Science  
British Association for Chemical Specialities  
British Box and Packaging Association  
British Cement Association  
British Ceramic Confederation  
British Chambers of Commerce

## ANNEX D

British Chemical Distributors and Traders Assoc  
British Coatings Federation  
British Ecological Society  
British Energy  
British Footwear Manufacturers Association  
British Furniture Manufacturers  
British Geological Survey  
British Glass Manufacturers Federation  
British Gypsum Board Ltd  
British Hardware and Housewares Manufacturers' Association  
British Hardware Federation  
British Institute of Funeral Directors  
British Leather Confederation  
British Lime Association  
British Meat Federation  
British Meat Processing Association  
British Medical Association (Scotland)  
British Nuclear Fuels Plc  
British Packaging Association  
British Plastics Federation  
British Poultry Meat Federation  
British Precast Concrete Federation Ltd  
British Printing Industries Federation  
British Rubber Manufacturers Association  
British Metals Recycling Association  
British Soil Science Society  
British Surface Treatment Suppliers Association  
British Water  
British Waterways  
British Wind Energy Association  
British Wood Preserving & Damp Proofing Assoc  
British Wood Turners Association  
British Woodworking Federation  
Business Council for Sustainable Development  
Business Council for Sustainable Energy UK  
Business in the Community  
Carbon Trust  
Carpet Foundation  
Cast Metal Federation  
Castings Technology International  
Central Science Laboratory  
Centre for Alternative Technology  
Centre for Corporate Social Responsibility  
Centre for Ecology & Hydrology

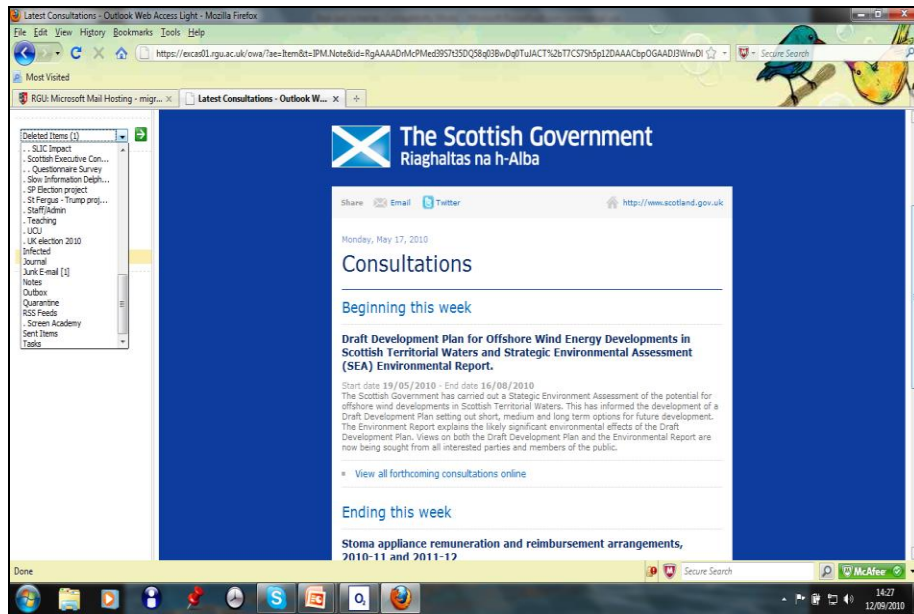
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- **47 (87%) had received at least one direct invitation in recent years;**
- **25 of these were confident that they were regularly receiving invitations to all relevant consultations;**
- **The others expressed concerns about the logic and consistency of the distribution lists system.**
- **We would recommend that a more targeted, tailored approach to identifying consultees be adopted.**



# seConsult Weekly Email Alerting Service

- **Launched in May 2004; currently has over 8,000 subscribers;**
- **25 (46%) of the sample subscribe to seConsult;**
- **21 of these also appear on distribution lists;**
- **Exactly half of the sample were completely unaware of the existence of seConsult.**



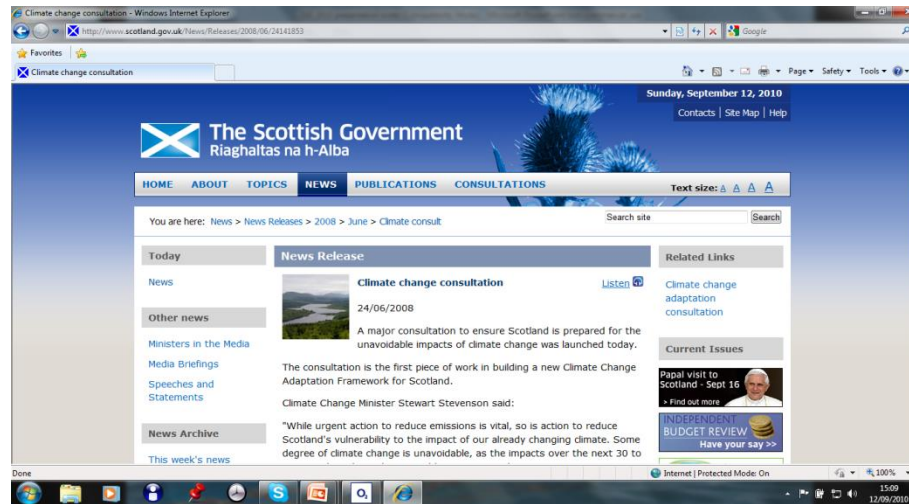
# Monitoring the Scottish Government Website



- **15 (28%) regularly monitor the SG website;**
- **Lack of awareness of link with *seConsult*.**



# Other Sources of Consultation Information



- **Only one of the 54 groups cited the media as an information source;**
- **18 (33%) can hear about consultations via other groups, networks or umbrella bodies.**
- **Eight organisations have been involved in a ‘pre-consultation’ stage (cf. Wyn Grant’s ‘Insider Groups’);**



# Information-gathering Methods Used

Information-gathering Method	No.	%
<b>Use of Internal Sources</b>		
Consult entire membership	24	44
Consult particular individuals or sub-groups within membership	39	72
Minimal or no consultation with membership	14	26
Consult internal primary/secondary data	14	26
<b>Use of External Sources</b>		
Consult sources on Web	19	35
Consult external subject experts	20	37
Exchange information with “like-minded” groups	17	31



# Finding Out About Consultation Results

- **47 (87%) were aware of having seen some form of consultation feedback;**
- **Just 22 (41%) were confident that they are always sent, or alerted to the location of, feedback;**
- **7 (13%) were adamant they had never seen feedback;**
- **10 (19%) search the Scottish Government website;**
- **5 (9%) usually hear via other groups and networks.**





# 'Types' of Feedback Obtained

**Smoking in PUBLIC PLACES**  
A CONSULTATION ON REDUCING EXPOSURE TO SECOND HAND SMOKE

**Key Findings of Responses to a Public Consultation**

## Analysis Report

**CHAPTER 4: WHETHER FURTHER ACTION NEEDS TO BE TAKEN**

4.1 The first question posed on the public consultation paper was "Having considered the health risks associated with passive smoking, do you think that further action needs to be taken to reduce people's exposure to second-hand smoke?" Responses were given the option of three responses: 'yes', 'no' or 'don't know'. They were then given the opportunity to add any further comments.

4.2 As shown in the following chart, the majority (82%) of those responding to the consultation felt that further action needs to be taken to reduce people's exposure to second-hand smoke, only 17% stated that no further action is required.

**Chart 4.1**  
Whether further action is needed to reduce exposure  
Base: All respondents (52,474)

Response	Percentage
Yes	82%
No	17%
Don't know	1%
No reply	1%

(Source: Q1)

4.3 When we examine sub-groups within the responses, there is little difference between the views of males and females, the age group of the respondents, or indeed the type of response, be that personal (82%) or on behalf of a group or organisation (79%).

4.4 However, there were some differences in terms of the method used to submit a response to the consultation. Of those using the web to respond, 84% felt that more needed to be done, whereas 79% of those responding via a hard copy of the consultation paper felt that further action needed to be taken to reduce people's exposure to second-hand smoke.

4.5 Not surprisingly, there were also differences according to smoking status, with 84% of those who do not smoke claiming that further action is needed, in comparison to only 47% of respondents who smoke. There were also some differences in response from organisations. Whilst the responses and suggestions responding to the consultation, those in the hospitality sector, especially bars and pubs, were less inclined to agree that further

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## Consultation Report

SPP 7: OVERVIEW OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES

**Executive Response:** Many of the points raised or sought clarification on the role and status of the Groups. To help in this they have been renamed as Flood Liaison and Advice Groups (FLAGs), though their essential purposes remain the same. FLAGs offer the flexibility to address many of the detailed points raised if the councils so choose and it is for them to make membership, including the insurance industry, though membership is voluntary. Concerning a national forum, The National Technical Advisory Group on Flooding has been established by the Scottish Ministers with a wide remit, which together with other existing arrangements, and those being introduced under WEWS are judged to be sufficient.

**Building Standards (paragraphs 12-13)**

18. Consultees assumed rightly that this section would be rewritten in the context of the new Building (Scotland) Act 2003. The key comment was that there should be no suggestion that building measures are an alternative to avoiding development in high risk areas. More guidance was sought on the role of building standards and the relationship with planning. There were several suggestions that the section may not be necessary (especially paragraph 13), but if retained it should give clarity as to the roles of each system. Several comments raised the problem of level access to buildings in areas where flooding is an issue.

**Executive Response:** The section has been rewritten in the light of the Act. Comments on flood resistant construction and level access are dealt with below in the section on flood resistant materials and construction.

**Insurance Issues and New Development (paragraph 14)**

19. The recognition that an input from the insurance industry was important was welcomed, including the difficulties in negotiating if insurance was problematic. There were suggestions about RAs and insurers sharing information, possibly through FLAGs, though others saw issues of confidentiality and resorting from the industry's perspective. Advice on insurer's involvement in development planning was sought in the RAH, including the issue of potential litigation. It was felt that it would be onerous if insurability became a material consideration and the ability of LAs to assess it was doubted. As consulting their own insurers was viewed negatively, as these may not be specialist flood insurers, and would be the view of one company only.

**Executive Response:** The general support for the statement was welcome. Clarification on the position of the industry has been provided by including a cross reference to the Association of British Insurers' Statement of Principles on the Provision of Flood Insurance, and a sentence added about the effects of a development on insurance elsewhere in a comment. The sentence about Council's consulting their own insurer's has been deleted.

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SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE  
Development Department

PLANNING

7 PLANNING AND FLOODING

**Review of SPP7 Planning and Flooding**

Overview of Consultation Responses

February 2004

- **Just 13 (24%) of the groups had encountered a 'Consultation Report';**
- **We recommend that the provision of post-consultation feedback be made *mandatory*, particularly in the form of 'Consultation Reports'.**

# Consultation or ‘Nonsultation’: Does the Scottish Government Listen?

- **32 (59%) believe the Scottish Government considers their responses;**
- **But difficult to establish because much (66%) of the feedback is presented anonymously;**
- **39 (72%) believe that some form of weighting is applied by government officials;**
- **We recommend that quotes and comments from respondents are *not* anonymised in post-consultation feedback reports.**

guiding principles or objectives set out in Recommendation 1 above.

2.2 There was widespread support for this idea: around 70 respondents, of all types, broadly welcomed the adoption of these principles.

*“The five ‘guiding principles and objectives’ upon which licensing boards should base their decisions demonstrates the intent of the committee to make licensing law an effective tool in combating alcohol misuse.”  
(Church/religious organisation)*

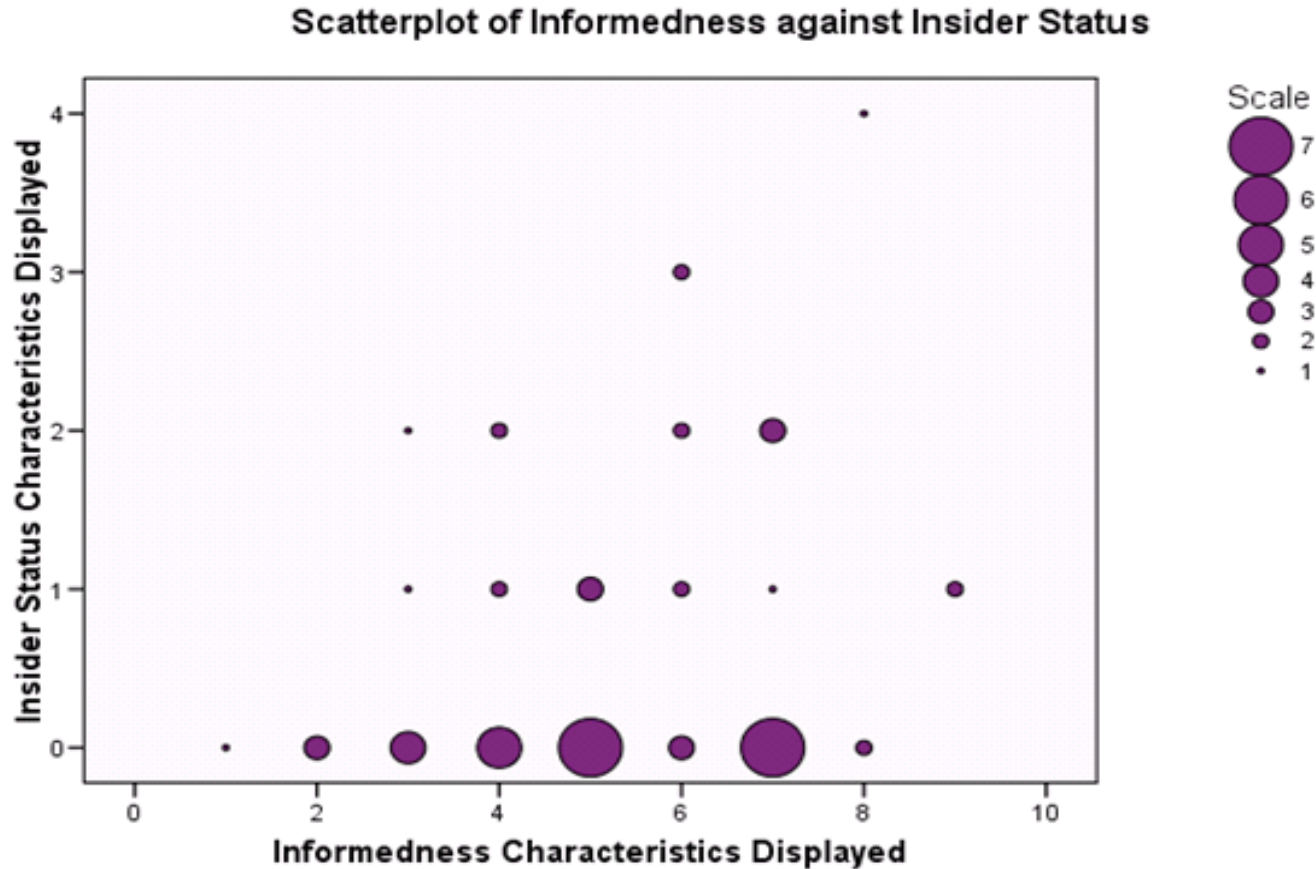
*“We welcome the introduction of the Guiding Principles as tools which Licensing Boards can use as an aid to decision making. They set out clearly the factors to be taken into consideration by Boards when granting licences.”  
(Licensing board)*

There were few specific comments about the guiding principles.

2.3 Although the principles were generally approved, there were concerns about how they would be translated into legislation, as they were seen as being open to interpretation in their current form. It was believed that this would lead to the making of arbitrary decisions. This view was held by just 6 respondents, from licensing boards, community groups, and those



# Informedness and Insider Status



**Pearson correlation = 0.250**

