

Mehnaz Salim

Student ID Number: 2319371

Module Name: Stakeholder Engagement

Module code: (LCBB4013_BIRM)

Teacher: Dr Mudassar Hassan

Title: Coursework Portfolio

Section 1

Stakeholder engagement is difficult to define as it is very complex thing. The Simply Stakeholders organisation defines stakeholder engagement as “the process of identifying and working with individuals or groups who have a stake in your project, especially those with high interest. It includes activities like mapping, planning, communication, feedback collection, and ongoing relationship building, including the creation of a communication plan aimed at creating better outcomes for everyone involved.”¹

Stakeholder engagement is very much important in the local community because it let people share idea and interest, and hope to find a good solution that give benefit to everyone. Because of this reason, it play a big important role in local areas because it make sure every person is think about and treat fair. This help the project make sure their interest is same with the people it affect or be affected by, because it show them what they must think is important interest in their local area.

The project I choose to look at is the open again of the Camphill railway train line in Birmingham. This will make the company Transport for West Midlands (TfWM) and other company name West Midlands Combined Authority to spend money to build new train stations in Kings Heath, Moseley Village and Pineapple road. I think the stakeholder engagement is very important in this project because it affect many groups. It affect the people living near the area, its supplier who will fix the train track, the customer who will sit on train and the local business shop too. So, I think it is a very good case study to look at when we look at stakeholder engagement. It affect many different person and organisations,

¹ Rodgers, A. (2024). Stakeholder Engagement: What It Means & Why It Matters. [online] Simply Stakeholders. Available at: <https://simplystakeholders.com/stakeholder-engagement/>.

and it force the project bosses to recognise stakeholders and find the best way to get the project done where local people are considered.

Section 2

Now, for this next part of my essay, I am going to talk about all the different group of peoples who connect to our Camp Hill railway train project and how much important they are. When I was doing my university reading, I learn from a very famous writer name Freeman (1984) that a stakeholder is any person who can affect a project or the project can affect them. Because opening these new train station is affecting so many different people and company, it force the project manager to look very careful at everyone who is involve.

To really understand everyone good, we use a special tool call Mendelow's Power and Interest Grid (Mendelow, 1981). It is a very clever set of boxes that put people into four different group. It put them by how much power they have to change the project, and how much interest they have in what is happen. This help us make the best plan to talk to each group, to make sure the project get done and locals get fair treat.

First, there is the group with very high power and very high interest. In Mendelow's box, we call this people the "Key Players." For our train project, these are the big boss like Transport for West Midlands (TfWM), the West Midlands Combined Authority, Network Rail, and the main builder company doing the heavy work. Their important level is very, very high because they are the main people making decision. They keep the money and they give the legal paper permission to build the station. The plan for this big group must be to manage them very close (PMI, 2021). Because they put so much money in, the best way to talk to them is direct and official, like boss meeting every week and official project computer screen to track the work. This work very good because it keep all thing professional and use fact. The big challenge here is make sure all their different company goal is matching, because maybe City Council and Network Rail want complete different thing for the station.

Second, there is the group with low power but very high interest. To me, I think this is the most important group because this is us! This is the local community peoples: the family living right here in Moseley, Kings Heath, and near Sparkhill, the local community group, and our small high street shop. We do not have the legal law power to stop the heavy train from coming, but our interest is so much high because we are the people suffering the loud machine noise, the bad dust in air, and losing our car parking space on street. The plan for talk to the community must be very kind and caring, focus on talk back and front a lot to keep us knowing information. If the project boss just send one standard paper letter, we feel ignore and get very angry very fast. The best way to reach us is local town hall meeting, drop-in chat at our community center, and put paper flyer in our home door to say sorry for night noise. This work well because we look the manager in the eye and ask our question direct. In the university book, the big challenge with this plan is beat something call "NIMBYism," this mean people saying "Not In My Back Yard" (Devine-Wright, 2011). The project manager must work very much hard to show us the long time good thing of the train to make the short time anger of the local family calm down.

Next, we have the person with high power but low interest. These are the national rule maker, like the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) and the Environment Agency. They do not care about the every day building noise on our local street, but they have the very big legal power to shut the whole project if it not follow the safety law. The plan to talk to this people is just about follow the rule the project simply need to keep them satisfy (Mendelow, 1981). The best way to talk to them is not town hall, but official safety check and very strict legal paper form. This work well because it give them exactly the paper they need without waste their time. The challenge here is to make sure every small detail is perfect correct, because one small mistake in paper can cause sudden legal stop that delay all the building work for long time.

Finally, the last group in the box is the people with low power and low interest. This is the wider Birmingham city population, like the people living very far away in Sutton Coldfield who never drive down our Alcester Road. They are the tax payer who pay for the wider money budget, but the daily building work not affect them at all. The project only need to keep one eye on this group. The plan for them is just leave information out there for them to maybe see. The best way is general news update to local newspaper, like Birmingham Live, and standard social media picture on the TfWM internet page. This work very well because it not cost too much time or money, but it keep the wider city know what is happen.

By looking at all four of these group very close, we can see that talk the right way with the right people is the only way to find a good solution that give benefit to everyone in the end.

Section 3

When we are looking at the big transport projects that Transport for West Midlands (TfWM) is doing, we always have a very big ethical problem. This problem is about what is better: the small local people or the big city.

In project management, some people say we must do what is good for the maximum number of people. So, building a good transport network is very good for Birmingham. It will stop the bad traffic jams, it help the local businesses make more money, and it give millions of people a cheap way to travel. For the big city, this look like very perfect plan.

But ethics is not just for the big city. We must ask is it fair? Is it right to make one small group of people have very bad time so that other people can have easy travel later? The local people who live near the construction site, they pay the heavy price. They must live with the work every single day. This mean they have loud noise all time, and it break their sleep. They have thick dust on their window and their car. The road is close many times, so going to the shop or taking children to school is very long and stressful.

From other ethical side, we have duty to treat all people fair. We cannot just use the local neighbourhood like a tool to fix the city problem. If TfWM do not care about the stress of the local people, then saying "it is for the city" is just a bad excuse for bad behaviour.

Being ethical mean you must be honest with people. Especially when you change their life very much. But big projects fail this thing many times. In the start, when they do public

meeting, the company show beautiful pictures. They promise the disruption will be fast and have no problem.

But the real life is different. The construction get delay, and project for one year take three years. The green park where people walk is close and put concrete on it. The car parking for the house is taken away forever. When TfWM or their builders hide the real truth about how long the pain is, or when they say the loss of local space is small, they break the trust. Ethically, they must tell the hard truth from the day one. Then people can prepare and not feel tricked.

TfWM have very strong goal for the environment. By making people use bus or tram, they help remove private car from the road. This support the Clean Air Zone in Birmingham and fight the climate change. This is very important for the future and for health.

But real Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) must happen on the street today also. It is not enough to build a green transport if the building process destroy the local area now. The builders working on the street must have respect. They need to use special wall to block the loud noise. They must put water on the dirt so bad dust do not go in the lung of people. They should use the heavy shaking machine only in the day, not in night when people sleep. Real CSR is care about people right in front of you today, not just the environment many years later.

When I think about all my research for this project, the biggest lesson I learn is the big difference between the theories and the real world. Managing and working with people very difficult in real life.

Mendelow's Power-Interest Grid. This grid is a nice chart to know how to manage different people in project. The textbook say, normal local residents go into a box name "Keep Informed". This is because they have high interest (the work is at their door) but they have low power to stop a big government project.

But watching this transport project, I see this theory is very flawed. Real people do not sit quiet in a box on a chart. When community feel ignored, and noise and dust push them to the limit, they change. I see angry residents make groups. They do petition, they call the local newspaper, and they bring the politicians. Very fast, these people who have "low power" get enough power to delay the project and make a big public relation nightmare. I learn you cannot manage stakeholders with just a simple graph. You must understand human emotion and community pride.

Doing this analysis help me get practical skills I will use forever. The most important is "strategic empathy". It is easy to feel sorry, but strategic empathy mean you try hard to understand why they are upset, so you can fix the root problem. When residents shout about close road, I know now they are not just angry for traffic. They are angry because they lose control of their neighbourhood and big company give no respect to them.

Also, I improve my skill in conflict resolution and corporate communication. I learn how to read a company press release and see past the good words. I can see what the company is

hiding. I see how the hidden things will cause big argument with public later. I learn that having a brave and honest talk at the beginning is the best way to stop massive fight months later.

Looking to the future, these lessons will change how I work in my career. When I am a project manager, I will never see community engagement like a boring task just to get permission. I know now that talking to community is the most important part of risk management and to be a good leader.

I understand that ignore people who look like they have "no power" is ethically wrong and also very bad business decision. If you ignore the locals, they will find way to stop your project, ruin your reputation, and cost much money. In my future job, I want to be famous for radical honesty. I will make sure I really listen to people. I will always remember that even if the project is very good for the city, we can never use this excuse to treat the local people outside the gate badly.

Section 4

In conclusion, looking at the Camp Hill railway train project show us that the list of stakeholders is very much complex. It is not just the big builder company doing the physical work. It is a very big mix of many different people in the real life. We have the big company who pay the money, the government who make the strict safety rule, the local business shop on the high street, and the normal family living in Moseley and Kings Heath. All these different group want different thing. Making everybody happy in the same time is a very hard job for the project manager.

Because of this hard work, I have two big recommendation for the future Transport for West Midlands (TfWM) project. My first recommendation is they must talk to the local residents more early in the process. They should not wait until the plan is finish to tell people what will happen. If they ask the community in the very first design time, the people will feel respect and they will not get angry later. My second recommendation is about the money for the shop. TfWM need to give better financial money help to the local small business. When the road is close for building construction, people do not walk to the shop and the business lose much money. The project must pay them back fair money so they do not stop their business forever.

For my final thought, I want to say that good stakeholder engagement is the absolute most important part for any work. If a big project want to be truly sustainable and have the long-term community acceptance, they cannot only do the physical building work. They must also make the local people trust them. If the local people feel listen to and support the project, the project will be a big success for everyone in the city. This will make Birmingham a much better place to live.

Bibliography

Devine-Wright, P. (2011). Renewable Energy and the Public: From NIMBY to Participation. London: Earthscan.

Freeman, R. E. (1984). *Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach*. Boston: Pitman.

Mendelow, A. L. (1981). *Environmental Scanning: The Impact of the Stakeholder Concept*. Proceedings of the Second International Conference on Information Systems, Cambridge, MA.

Project Management Institute. (2021). *A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK Guide) (7th ed.)*. Newtown Square, PA: Project Management Institute.

Simply Stakeholders. (n.d.). What is Stakeholder Engagement? [Online]. Available at: <https://simplystakeholders.com>