Office for Environmental Protection

Board Paper 00.00

Title: Stakeholder Engagement	
Report Author: REDACTED Principal Communications & Engagement Manager	**Paper for decision**
Accountable Executive Director: Richard Greenhous, Chief of Staff	

Summary

Issue

1. This paper shares our refreshed approach to Stakeholder Engagement and seeks the Board's support for the organisational shift needed to embed it.

Recommendation

2. The Board is asked to consider and comment on the refreshed approach.

Background

3. The Board has previously identified stakeholder engagement as needing improvement, as part of implementing our current strategy. An internal audit review of stakeholder engagement in April 2025 provided moderate assurance, saying some improvement was needed, while noting plans were in place to do so, including to increase specialist capacity. This has formed part of the OEP Improvement Programme.
4. Previously, responsibility for stakeholder engagement activity in the communications team formed part of the portfolios of both the Head of Communications and one of the two Principal Communications Managers. Competing priorities made it impossible for them to give stakeholder engagement the consistent and strategic attention it required.
5. In November we recruited an additional G7 Principal Communications Manager as a dedicated lead on stakeholder engagement. *The name has been redacted as it includes personal data*

Analysis

6. She has reviewed our existing stakeholder engagement plan and developed a new approach, which she will present to us at this meeting, using the slides at Annex A.
7. In doing so, she identified a central challenge: moving stakeholder engagement from a set of useful but dispersed activities into a **joined-up, strategic, organisation-wide approach to influence.**
8. The new approach seeks to address four connected issues:
    a. Engagement was not sufficiently strategic, coordinated or prioritised across the organisation, meaning influence was not consistently treated as a shared organisational discipline.
    b. Stakeholder insight was fragmented, unevenly accessed and not always used to identify gaps in reach, build a fuller picture of relationships, or share learning and good practice.
    c. The OEP is operating in a difficult external environment, marked by political volatility, competing priorities and some stakeholder relationships that are more transactional or one-way than strategic.

d. Internal capacity, confidence and integration are uneven, with communications and engagement not always built into projects from the outset or sustained throughout delivery.

9. The refreshed approach responds to these challenges by establishing clearer expectations for planning, prioritising, recording and evaluating engagement, so that activity is more purposeful, better coordinated and more closely aligned to the OEP's strategic objectives. It will give the organisation a stronger picture of stakeholder relationships and influence, help teams focus effort where it can have greatest impact, and provide greater assurance that engagement is being used consistently to support delivery and secure impact.
10. The approach set out intends that stakeholder engagement should become a **core organisational discipline**: planned, prioritised, intelligence-led and evaluated, delivered by staff across the organisation with support from the communications team — so that the OEP can use its independence, evidence and influence to greater effect.
11. The OEP cannot engage equally with everyone. The model intends to ensure we make **deliberate choices about who matters most for each objective**, where effort is best spent, and what outcome engagement is meant to support
12. **To work, the model will require sustained effort** – it will need consistent stakeholder mapping, recording, planning, feedback loops and evaluation — otherwise it risks remaining a set of principles rather than a changed way of working.
13. Embedding this model will require visible leadership and **ownership across the organisation**. It will only work if senior leaders model the behaviours, teams see engagement as part of delivery, and there is shared accountability.

Implementation

14. Successful implementation will depend on visible senior leadership, consistent behaviours and shared accountability across the organisation. The approach is a significant evolution of our established approach, not a revolution. But it does create some revised asks for staff, particularly around considering our stakeholders from the outset and throughout the lifetime of a project, taking the time to think more systemically about the purpose of engagement and being more disciplined about recording data and sharing insights.
15. The increased capacity and specific capability now in the communications team means it can provide the organisation with coherent and comprehensive support for this approach. We have already started to implement aspects of that approach and intend a full roll-out to staff over the next two months.

Annexes

Annex A – *This section has been redacted as its publication would be prejudicial to the effective conduct of public affairs.*

Board members wishing to understand more of the detail that can find that in:

Annex B – *This section has been redacted as its publication would be prejudicial to the effective conduct of public affairs.*

Annex C – *This section has been redacted as its publication would be prejudicial to the effective conduct of public affairs.*

Annex D – *This section has been redacted as its publication would be prejudicial to the effective conduct of public affairs.*

Annex E – *This section has been redacted as its publication would be prejudicial to the effective conduct of public affairs.*