THE POLITICS OF

OF | Community engagement and consent

REBUILDING BRITAIN

By Marcus Roberts

ABOUT THE FABIAN SOCIETY

The Fabian Society is Britain's oldest political think tank. Since 1884 the society has played a central role in developing political ideas and public policy on the left. It aims to promote greater equality of power and opportunity; the value of collective public action; a vibrant, tolerant and accountable democracy; citizenship, liberty and human rights; sustainable development; and multilateral international cooperation.

Through a wide range of publications and events the society influences political and public thinking, but also provides a space for broad and open-minded debate, drawing on an unrivalled external network and its own expert research and analysis. Its programme offers a unique breadth, encompassing national conferences and expert seminars; periodicals, books, reports and digital communications; and commissioned and in-house research and comment.

The Society is alone among think tanks in being a democratically-constituted membership organisation, with almost 7,000 members. Over time our membership has included many of the key thinkers on the British left and every Labour prime minister. Today we count over 200 parliamentarians in our number. The voluntary society includes 70 local societies, the Fabian Women's Network and the Young Fabians, which is itself the leading organisation on the left for young people to debate and influence political ideas.

The society was one of the original founders of the Labour party and is constitutionally affiliated to the party. We are however editorially, organisationally and financially independent and work with a wide range of partners from all political persuasions and none.

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About the author

Marcus Roberts was appointed as deputy general secretary of the Fabian Society in 2011. He leads the society's Labour's Next Majority programme. Marcus served as field director of the Ed Miliband for Leader campaign and was campaign manager for Rushanara Ali's 2010 Bethnal Green & Bow election. He is a founding partner of Zentrum Consulting and also worked on the Al Gore, John Kerry and Barack Obama US presidential campaigns.

Roundtables and interviews

Over 2013 and 2014 the Fabian Society convened a series of off-the-record roundtables exploring issues of infrastructure in the areas of energy, transport and housing. This work has contributed to a number of reports in this area with this one focusing on infrastructure and community consent.The attendees and interviewees included: Roberta Blackman-Woods (Shadow Communities and Local Government minister), Jon Cruddas MP (Policy Review Co-ordinator), Rowenna Davis (Labour party), Patrick Diamond (former adviser to Prime Minister Gordon Brown), Deanne Dukhan (AGAST), Hugh Ellis (TCPA), Maria Eagle MP (former Shadow Secretary for Transport), Jeff English (Integrated Transport, Leeds) Barry Gardiner MP, Jonathan Gaventa and Nick Mabay (E3G), Nick Glover (LEP Executive Officer, Birmingham & Solihull LEP), Tom Greatrex (Shadow energy minister), Alastair Harper (Green Alliance), Stephen Joseph (Campaign for Better Transport), Mark Lazorwich MP, David Leam (London First), David Martin (Weinberg Foundation), Katherine Mercer and Gabe Win (Centrica), Terry Morgan (Crossrail), Olly Parker (Co-op Party), Daniel Parker-Klein (CILT), Nicola Shaw (Chief Executive, HS1), Val Shawcross AM (Transport Committee, London Assembly), Barry Sheerman MP, Mark Shorrock (Tidal Lagoon Power), Gary Smith (Lyons Housing Review), Ben Still (Chief Executive, Sheffield City Region), Will Straw (Institute for Public Policy Research), Graham Stringer MP, Corin Taylor (Institute of Directors), Sir Robin Wales (Mayor, Newham local authority), Sam White (former adviser to Chancellor Alastair Darling), Alan Whitehead MP (former Transport minister), as well as those who preferred to remain anonymous.

Summary

Britain's infrastructure needs in terms of housing, transport and energy are dramatic. Yet due to a combination of poor political management and a lack of local of community consent, major development plans are on the brink of total gridlock.

From the LSE growth commission to the government's own national infrastructure plan, public policy responses continue to propose centrally-determined solutions. Communities are seen as obstructions to, rather than partners of, change in their local areas. To address the question of community consent, both state and private developers have until now largely operated on the basis of only two options: altruism or bribery.

This report calls for an entirely new approach that prioritises engaging with communities from the outset of new infrastructure projects, through:

1. Individual identification of people who support, oppose and are undecided about the planned development, as well as key community influencers.

2. Listening to the hopes and fears of communities in the context of the development project.

3. Establishing trust over time, starting with small actions like fixing a community hall's roof, and build up to larger scale promises such as creating local jobs.

4. Community compensation for the community as a whole, instead of bribing individuals with cash.

5. Offering clear and consistent reasoning of project rationale.

6. Offering personal guarantees that citizens affected by major development projects will directly benefit from those projects.

By listening to the needs of local people and gradually earning their trust, a new and genuine partnership can be built between the private sector, the state and local communities.

1 BRITAIN'S INFRASTRUCTURE CHALLENGE

By 2030 Britain will be a nation of 70 million people. The attendant infrastructure needs in terms of housing, transport and energy are dramatic. In housing, Shelter estimates that Britain requires an extra 250,000 affordable houses every year for at least the next decade just to deal with our current capacity needs, let alone the needs of a population of 70 million.[i] In transport, Britain still has rural railway lines that are un-electrified. The capacity demand of a London to the north west rail route is expected to grow by more than 30 per cent in the next decade alone.[ii] In energy, Britain is already struggling to keep the lights on, as successive governments of all parties have failed to expand our energy capacity with long-term investment to meet demand.

But an all too common mistake in debating major development projects is to think of them either purely or predominantly through the lens of national need. A locality's needs – indeed, a community's needs – are potentially as important as national needs. Indeed, when it comes to the vexed issue of consent, it is highly likely that the arguments addressing a locality or community's needs are in fact far more persuasive.

However, the traditional response to these national needs by both government and private sector alike has been to develop a series of large scale, long-term answers that are centrally mandated and locally enforced. Justification is offered on the grounds of national interest, and the voice of local communities that lie in the path of rail routes dreamed up in Whitehall, new towns imagined by urban planners, or power plants desired by energy companies are ignored. Now that our infrastructure needs are bigger than ever, the response is more of the same - more need has meant more attempted diktats.

In essence, the status quo that shapes development decision-making could be characterised as a clash between local authorities applying detailed planning processes against developers heavily armed with lawyers and consultants. As such, a conflict of bureaucratic attrition occurs in which the actual needs of the citizen or community are all too easily squeezed out.

However, a sustainable future for infrastructure development does not rely on lawyers, licences and permits, but on obtaining genuine local consent. Instead of a traditional authoritarian approach, developers and politicians should plan to invest far more time and money in the consultation period, winning the community's trust and working in genuine partnership with community organisations. Although communities typically welcome the idea of new investment and jobs in their neighbourhood, they are often sceptical that a large state or corporate developer will actually deliver these goals. During this consultation period, communities must be convinced that they truly stand to benefit from the development project in question and given the opportunity to exercise meaningful agency from an early stage.

To address the question of community consent, both state and private developers have until now largely operated on the basis of only two options:

altruism or bribery. Altruism depends on an appeal to the affected individual, family or community based on their willingness to sacrifice their land or quality of life for the national economic need. Bribery, on the other hand, presumes that either more generous personal payouts or larger section 106 grants to local authorities can buy consent. And yet as the cautionary tales of both HS2 and attempted shale gas exploration in Balcombe show, neither of these options - nor even their combination - have secured community consent.

As practitioners and experts at all the Fabian roundtables noted, in response to appeals to altruism, communities have time and again accepted the logic of the case for major development to meet our national economic needs, but replied with a simple 'not in my back yard' riposte. When combined with low levels of trust towards government and companies alike, the weakness of the altruism strategy is further exposed.

As for what even some developers have described off-the-record as 'bribery', the amounts that are offered are frequently not enough to answer citizens' concerns, particularly when they do not think the authority involved has been honest about the true cost of the project to themselves or their communities. When the 'bribe' takes the form of extra employment, trust again becomes a problem; residents rarely believe projected job numbers are accurate, or that the new jobs will necessarily go to local people.

Explaining the case for infrastructure development is a crucial part of obtaining consent, but after the state decides upon a major project it normally leaves responsibility for justifying it locally to the developer. The state's explanatory responsibility thus tends to be limited to that of a national level, creating a clash between national, politically considered reasons for the development, and local level technical explanations by developers on the ground. A better integration of national and local political and technical messaging is clearly required. Politicians and developers must come together to win the argument on why a development is necessary before they can consider the finer details of the project and how it can be advanced. Once this has been established, greater consideration should also be given as to who should lead on explaining the reasons for the development to the local community. These decisions made on a bespoke basis, depending entirely on where trust lies in each instance.

The practical politics of pursuing major development projects also suffers from party politics and changes in government. As HS2 clearly shows, even a project which begins with initial strong bipartisan support can eventually lose that support if the argument has not been won in the community. As the rules of political gravity take effect, and oppositions move to exploit government weakness when the inevitable problems of multi-billion pound projects occur, it is easy to see why ambitious projects can become derailed. As we shall see later, this is another reason for investing more time and money earlier in winning the argument in the community, so there is less political advantage to be gained by parties withdrawing support later.

The considered response of the British establishment to all of these challenges has been seen in the reports of the LSE growth Commission and the Armitt industrial strategy review as well as the government's own national infra-structure plan. In all of these instances their approach can be characterised as a doubling down on a top-down solution. Each of these reports propose ever more and larger projects to be determined centrally with community consent purchased through ever larger bribes.

Table 1: Infrastructure reviews

Review	INDEPENDENT ARMITT REVIEW OF INFRASTRUCTURE
Infrastructure remit	• 'Whether a new institutional structure can be established that better enables the long-term decision making necessary for strategic infrastructure planning' • 'How political consensus can be forged around these decisions'
Chief recommendations	• 'A new independent national infrastructure commission to look 25-30 years ahead at the evidence for the UK's future needs across all significant national infrastructure and set clear priorities, for example, nationwide flood prevention or energy supply' • 'This national infrastructure assessment would be carried out every 10 years and include extensive research and consultations with the public, local government, NGOs, regulators and other interested groups or individuals' • 'A parliamentary vote on the evidence-based infrastructure priorities would have to take place within six months of their publication, to avoid delays' • 'Within 12 months of this vote government departments would have to form detailed 10 year sector plans of how they will deliver and fund work towards these priorities' • 'Parliament would then vote on these 10 year plans and the permanent national infrastructure commission would scrutinise the ability of these plans to meet the 25-30 year national priorities and report to parliament annually on their delivery'[iii]
Review	LSE GROWTH COMMISSION
Infrastructure remit	• 'What institutions and policies are needed to sustain UK economic growth in the dynamic world economy of the twenty first century?'
Chief recommendations	• 'An infrastructure strategy board to provide independent expert advice to parliament to guide strategic priorities' • 'An infrastructure planning commission to support the implementation of those priorities with more powers to share the gains from infrastructure investment by more generously compensating those who stand to lose from new developments' • 'An infrastructure bank to facilitate the provision of finance, to bring in expertise and to work with the private sector to share, reduce and manage risk'[iv]

Review	NATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN
Infrastructure remit	• 'Articulates the government's approach, sector by sector, to identifying and delivering the infrastructure that is needed – and the rationale for selecting each of the government's top 40 priority investments'
Chief recommendations	• 'An integrated transport system that provides reliable, cost-effective domestic and international connections for organisations and individuals' • 'Digital networks that enable us to access crucial information and resources, and communicate with each other and people across the world from our homes and workplaces and on the move' • 'Sustainable, reliable and affordable energy, water and waste networks that mean we have sufficient energy, clean water and protection from the consequences of flooding and climate change'[v]

The Armitt and LSE efforts are at least well intentioned and thoughtfully considered attempts to address the problems plaguing major development projects. In contrast, the government's national infrastructure plan is a textbook example of how and why the UK fails to do big infrastructure properly. Having set out a 'pipeline' of projects (including a 'top 40 list of priority projects') worth hundreds of billions of pounds, the government gives the game away in the small print addendum to its plan: 'the pipeline is not a statement of need or a commitment to undertake any of the projects shown.'

In fact, there are only two concrete commitments made in the plan. The first is to establish a 'dedicated "hot-desk" in Infrastructure UK where top 40 project owners can raise issues of concern, special consideration in the planning regime and UK guarantees scheme.' The second is to create 'a new major infrastructure tracking unit within Infrastructure UK which will allow it to track the progress of each top 40 investment.'

But the scale of Britain's infrastructure needs is so great that mere aspiration and advisory call centers are not enough. Rather, to set a successful infrastructure strategy for Britain the national plan should make binding commitments to meet our needs, coupled with flexibility in how this is then achieved. In this respect the work of the Armitt review is genuinely deserving of praise.

Nonetheless, a significant problem in the approach of all three is their assessment that democratic decision-making is itself part of the problem, and that politics should therefore be removed from the planning process. This manifests in the form of proposals to simplify planning laws, curtail consultation rights and reduce both local government and parliamentary authority. In place of the status quo, the establishment envisions non-political, non-partisan panels of 'wise men' who will decide Britain's infrastructure priorities and assign development permissions accordingly. In their view, the complicating and delaying power of politics will thus be circumvented and the need for community consent will be eliminated.

For example, the LSE growth commission proposes no fewer than three independent non-political panels: an infrastructure strategy board; an infrastructure planning commission; and an infrastructure bank for financing.[x] This would

replace ministerial planning decisions, parliamentary oversight and local and devolved government decision making, while also dramatically reducing the already limited power of community voices. Spending decisions amounting to hundreds of billions of pounds over the decades to come will become the preserve of technocrats. Furthermore, it is telling that in the LSE commission's final report just one bullet point spoke to the issue of community consent. Their only proposal was to increase the generosity of compensation offers.[xi]

NEW LABOUR'S HOUSING TARGETS: A CASE STUDY IN THE FAILURE OF CENTRAL TARGETS

Between 1997 and 2010 the administrations of both Tony Blair and Gordon Brown were committed to the construction of hundreds of thousands of new homes a year. In fact, such was the ambition by 2008 that a remarkable pledge of three million homes by 2020 was proffered.[vi] Each cabinet reshuffle would see a new housing minister appointed who would promise a major development programme driven by central government construction targets. At the end of 13 years of Labour government it is telling that none of these targets were achieved.[vii] The record on social housing construction was equally disappointing. As Labour London assembly member Tom Copley noted: 'More council homes were built in the last year of Thatcher's government than were built in the 13 years of Labour government.'[viii]

Instead the monies Whitehall made available to local authorities were overwhelmingly spent on improving existing housing stock, whilst precious few new homes were built.[ix]

The reasons for this are three fold. The first was the north-south divide in British politics. Labour-run councils were predominantly in the north of England where housing repairs were (and are) a higher priority for spending than new housing. Meanwhile though the south needed new homes, councils tended to be under the control of Conservative local authorities who were often against new home building, meaning money was rarely spent on new construction.

Secondly, new Labour refused to relax local authority borrowing rules to allow councils to borrow for capital spend on housing above and beyond central grants, and account for that borrowing off balance sheet in terms of public borrowing accounts, as is the case in most other European Union countries. This in turn limited new house building.

Finally, there was a lack of understanding of the integrated need for local authorities, housing associations, national government and private developers to agree, stick to and implement a sustained strategy of house building over the long term. Taken together, these problems meant that it did not matter how many central government diktats were issued, the numbers of new houses built fell far short of the grand goals of Whitehall.

In terms of the question of the interests of the community it is hard to imagine how an approach predicated on national need and depending on bribery as the sole lubricant of citizen consent could genuinely claim to take community interest seriously.

Setting to one side the ethical question of whether democracy should be so disregarded, these solutions are unlikely to yield the desired outcomes. As we shall see in the next chapter, the examples of shale gas and HS2 are instructive. These proposals represent a classic embrace of a centralisation strategy likely to yield impressive short-term returns whilst compounding

long-term problems. It is likely that the adoption of such a strategy would see the approval and execution of a small number of major projects, for instance additional runway capacity at Heathrow or the construction of several new nuclear power plants. But these projects are only likely to embed discontent at the community level as individuals feel increasingly powerless to influence decisions or shape how developments impact on their lives. As such, community level discontent will build until it finds even stronger expression at a later date; until a far larger number of infrastructure projects of any scale and of any need are delayed, made more costly or even defeated outright by the power of direct protest and voter backlash.

Such an approach fundamentally represents the folly of the apolitical, for all an attempt to remove politics from development decision making will actually achieve is a reduction in transparency and a shift in who receives the blame. There is no escaping the politics of making multi-billion pound decisions that affect the lives of vast numbers of voters and have lasting consequences on everything from GDP to the environment. The question of who appoints these commissioners, who these commissioners are accountable to, and by what means their decision making will be scrutinised, will simply become the new forum for politicians to influence development decision making. As such, all these commissions will do is shift politics from its current – albeit limited – transparency, to an even cloudier system of oversight in the future.

The establishment's response to Britain's infrastructure needs is undeniably attractive. It appears to be able to dismiss discontent and deliver swift outcomes at the stroke of a bureaucrat's pen. Viewed like this, it is an offer almost too good to be true – and like all such offers, it is indeed. Decision makers should know from the history of public policy that large scale change is seldom achieved painlessly and swiftly, but rather, through hard fought, hard won consent building from the ground up. Meaningful and enduring change takes time, money and trust, which can only be won through an approach to developing community consent radically different from the failed models of altruism and bribery.

The development establishment, from the LSE growth commission to planning minister Nick Boles, thinks that this entire thesis is time consuming, expensive and unnecessary. But it is my view that the establishment has misunderstood the real costs of their approach. Consider the time in political lobbying, the money in crisis communications and cash compensation packages and the damage to reputation that curtailed consultation and consequent backlash represent. Although the costs of a genuine engagement programme would be high, possibly hundreds of thousands of pounds, the savings in terms of time and money cleaning up the mess later far outstrip the costs. What's more, when the cost of infrastructure projects is often counted in the billions or even tens of billions, the idea of spending even millions to secure real and lasting community consent is more rational than it may first appear.

HS2: HOW NOT TO SELL A PROJECT TO A POPULACE

The attempt to develop Britain's second high speed rail line linking London to Birmingham has been in consideration for decades. Its attempted implementation has been nothing less than a chapter of accidents, and thus serves as a useful guide in how not to do big infrastructure projects.

It began with the Department for Transport in essence drawing a line from London to Birmingham (bizarrely skipping Heathrow), with little to no thought given to the communities in between.[xii] In terms of budget, costs have not been controlled as private suppliers operating on the presumption that the project was 'too big to fail' have had every opportunity to increase prices, while the limited number of suppliers of discreet technical elements can abuse their oligopoly status at will.

Furthermore, both governments - New Labour and the coalition - have repeatedly changed the publicly stated rationale for the project. At times political leaders have variously emphasised speed, northern regional economic develop, fiscal stimulus and passenger capacity as the main public justification of the project. This has eroded trust and public confidence, making the task of community consent building all the harder.[xiii]

Finally, planning consultation meetings with the general public have become case studies in how to dissuade rather than persuade citizens. Citizens have been presented with a fait accompli, informing them which houses would be destroyed and what land compulsorily purchased so as to achieve the mandated route. The officials despatched to sell the project to citizens were often professional planners whose command of the jargon outstripped their gift to communicate clearly.

As a result of these errors trust was further eroded. Even good arguments found their efficacy diminished as citizen backlash grew. The enormous time lag between the unveiling of the HS2 route and its requisite costs, and the actual construction of the railway with its attendant benefits, meant that the costs of HS2 were immediate while benefits felt distant. This created a perfect storm of public opposition, expressed through a combination of local public protest and natural public scepticism fuelled by media hostility. Taken together, the combination of shifting rationale, spiralling cost, mishandled public engagement and the lengthy air-gap between decision and implementation could well lead to formal political opposition and the cancellation of the project.

Those who believe that such a political u-turn could be prevented by simply farming out a decision of this scale to a non-political body miss the point entirely. If, for the sake of argument, the Labour party does decide to reverse its current support for HS2, then it will not be a failure of politics but rather an entirely logical expression of politics, in the sense of democratic decision-making. The actual failure is to be found in the way in which governments and developers failed to manage public discontent, redress legitimate grievances and win community support.

SHALE GAS EXPLORATION: A MISSED OPPORTUNITY TO ALLAY FEARS?

Britain potentially possesses large scale shale gas reserves. But the national debate on shale gas has been overwhelmingly shaped in negative terms.[xiv]

Firstly, there were reports of earthquakes caused by the rock fracturing process (which itself goes by the unfortunate term 'fracking'). Next were environmentalists' concerns about the potential contamination of the water table as a by-product of rock fracturing. The prospect of thousands of such sites with accompanying disruptions to local life and damage to the local environment further fuelled opposition. This in turn combined with concerns that the government's preference for gas exploitation in national energy policy would come at the cost of meeting the UK's carbon emissions reduction targets.

For an industry that had already drilled more than 2,000 onshore wells in relative peace, this was a wholly new context. Shale gas operators now faced an unlikely alliance of opposition stretching from environmentalist direct action groups, Conservative MPs from rural constituencies, prominent tabloid journalists and many local residents potentially affected. Regardless of one's position on shale gas, it is clear that the public narrative has become dominated by the potential negatives of projected large scale drilling rather than the reality of a handful of discrete exploratory drilling efforts seeking to establish the very viability of significant shale exploitation.

Cuadrilla Resources, the first operator to demonstrate the potential of shale gas exploration in Lancashire, had planning consent to drill an oil well in Balcombe, granted almost three years earlier when such operations were uncontroversial.

By the time Cuadrilla initiated operations, it was apparent that residents did not fully accept their legal rights to operate, and were unwilling to give the company a hearing. There was not sufficient time for Cuadrilla and the authorities that granted consent to invest in painstakingly informing local residents what the exploratory drilling for oil was and was not. With citizens lacking both information about the specific nature of the exploratory work and trust in large corporations and governments in general, opponents were able to seize the upper hand.

This incident demonstrates how companies' brands can become controversial and companies can lose valuable time, money and political capital. Instead, companies and relevant regional and local authorities should work together to allay fears in the community, to create different outcomes.

2 COMMUNITY CONSENT AND ENGAGEMENT

The state and private companies must both fundamentally rethink the way they do development. This essentially requires large investment in innovative community engagement before the planning process has gone through, rather than spending money reacting to opposition later.

At the heart of why major development projects fail to win community consent is the question of trust. For these projects to be successful in the future, politicians and developers must completely reimagine how trust is earned. This will have radical implications for how both the state and private sector developers interact with individuals and community organisations, and attendant change in both argumentation and compensation. Simply put, a process of individual identification, listening and gradually earning trust must be matched by custom-built community compensation and clear project rationales. This should all be underwritten by personal guarantees. With this formula, community consent may be earned anew.

1. Individual identification: identifying at an individual level people who support, oppose and are undecided about the planned development, as well as key community influencers.

2. Listening: through a combination of one-to-one conversations, small group meetings and town hall style events, listening to the hopes and fears of identified individuals for their community in the context of the opportunities and challenges posed by the development project.

3. Gradual proof of trust: by combining an active listening campaign with tangible actions based upon citizens' feedback, developers can build trust over time. In this model, they would start with small actions, for example a playground expansion or fixing a community hall's roof, and build up to larger scale promises such as jobs, training programmes or guaranteed benefits from the development project.

4. Community compensation: as referenced above, this form of compensation goes beyond bribing the individual with cash, but offers to meet the needs of a community as a whole.

5. Clarity and consistency of project rationale: developers and their partners must be very clear about why the project needs to take place, and make sure they offer clear reasoning before deciding what the project is or how it is to be built.

6. Personal guarantees: citizens affected by major development projects should directly benefit from those projects. For example, guaranteeing that a proportion of new houses will be reserved for local residents, or offering discounted energy bills after a new plant is built. Citizens should also

be guaranteed a greater degree of agency once the project is underway, for example the ability to halt the project if a certain number of guarantees are not being fulfilled.

The building blocks of this approach lie in a daring fusion of big data and old fashioned door knocking; listening to and understanding people's concerns for themselves, their families, friends and communities. Using this method, developers can identify the individual push and pull factors that a prospective development project offers at an individual level and offer bespoke arguments to persuade citizens. Furthermore, through the adoption of community organising tactics, the key opinion formers within a community can be identified and extra efforts made to influence them.

These methods draw a huge amount from political campaigns. Drawing on the wealth of political science research that indicates voters are more likely to be influenced by family, friends and neighbours rather than strangers (a point borne out by decades of consumer market research affirming the power of word of mouth endorsements) developers can identify those leaders within a community, whose influence can be brought to bear upon their personal networks to secure wider community consent. This is essentially a three step process which we will now consider.

FROM 'WORD OF MOUTH' THEORY TO COMMUNITY CONSENT

This approach is in essence a more modern, technology-aided version of the approach to sales whereby word-of-mouth endorsements for products are orchestrated through carefully researched and well placed interventions in the sector.[xv] In advertising theory terms, the value of such neighbour-to-neighbour support is highly prized and its extension to a means of developing community consent is thus logical.

Methodology section one: understanding citizens

At the heart of this new approach to community consent lies a better understanding of citizens' opinions and emotions with regard to not just to the project in question, but to their community as a whole. Developers should make every effort to better engage with citizens so as to understand their hopes and fears and tailor their work accordingly. To aid developers in gaining a more thorough understanding of individuals, data analytics programmes can be used.

An analytics programme should be used to establish the propensity of individual citizens in three areas. First, their likely support or opposition for the development project. Second, their likelihood to take action and third their susceptibility to different arguments. This will inform developers about targeting decisions. It will tell them how many citizens they should speak to, who those citizens are and what messages should be used to convince each individual of the merits of the project in question.

It is however important to note that significant shifts in public opinion can occur when citizens who sit in the median range of local public opinion engage with an issue, particularly if this comes in the context of close attention being paid to that issue. Developers would therefore be advised to factor this in when planning their community engagement efforts.

This has a number of advantages. It means that consultation can be much more targeted and effective. Instead of spending time with people who will never change their minds, developers can identify individuals who are convincible and spend a longer time with them using the arguments that are likely to be most effective. This can pre-empt the emergence of larger scale opposition by winning over the great majority of otherwise undecided citizens.

The second benefit is the nurturing of a constituency of support for the project who will to varying degrees both passively and actively support the project. Passive supporters may simply not join protest efforts, whilst active supporters may argue for the project throughout the local consultation process. Too often developers are chiefly concerned with neutralizing known organised opposition to their project, rather than developing a constituency of support of their own. Analytics will allow developers to categorise citizens into opponents, neutrals and potential supporters to create and implement a plan not just for consultation, but for conversion. Ultimately this will create the community conditions necessary to win over sufficient local support for a development project to go through.

WHAT IS ANALYTICS?[xvi]

Analytics is a means of predicting the likelihood of individuals to believe certain things or take certain actions. It achieves this through a four step process. First, a mass survey of public opinion is carried out, with dozens of questions answered by thousands of individuals. Next, this information is combined (in order of importance) with demographic, socio-economic and consumer data to improve the researchers' understanding of each individual. Then the third phase is the utilisation of 'look-a-like' modelling. An analytical approach that assumes that family members within a household have a high degree of similarity in terms of their attitudes and actions with one another. In turn, neighbours, hold a lesser degree of similarity, but one that is still stronger than geographically more distant individuals. This allows analysts to build out their model from a base of tens of thousands to hundreds of thousands. The final phase is the construction of an analytical model which combines all of this information to forecast the likelihood or propensity of that individual to hold certain attitudes or take certain actions, based usually on a scale of zero to one hundred for each person. It is important to note, however, that this scale is not a percentage likelihood of their attitude but rather the idea that out of 100 individuals who look like this person, that many people will normally hold those views.

Methodology section two - leadership identification

As both political science[xvii] and consumer theory[xviii] can attest, word of mouth endorsements or condemnations from known and trusted individuals carry more sway than interventions from strangers. Within any given community, some individuals possess more influence than others. These leaders are by definition nexuses of opinion, and it is important to identify them if a developer is to gain community consent for a project because they can influence others in their community.

These leaders can be identified by a process known as 'power mapping' in

which all the formal leaders of a given community (religious leaders, politicians, head teachers etc) as well as the informal leaders of a community are plotted. By informal leaders, we mean the people who may not have a title, but on a street level influence their neighbours through their conversation and example. Formal leaders generally have a smaller influence over a larger group of people, whilst informal leaders have a stronger influence over a smaller group of people. These leaders can be identified through a combination of open source research (local media, community bulletin boards, internet searches etc) and basic survey work asking residents to list local people who influence them.[xix]

Methodology section three - listening to hopes and fears

Having analysed the community quantitively and qualitatively through analytics and leadership identification, it is then possible to build a programme of community engagement in pursuit of a 'win number' representing not only the number of people who need to be won over, but also who they are and where they live.

For example, in a community of 100,000, let us assume that analytics informs us that 70,000 individuals will not care either way and have little influence. Some 10,000 individuals are against, 10,000 are in favour and 10,000 are interested but genuinely undecided. Assuming that the prospects

of the project going ahead will be significantly improved by winning over more than half the undecideds, these people can be identified and targeted through data. Obviously it makes sense to target leaders first so that they can be influencing others from the start. Given a set time frame for consultation, it is possible to work backwards to figure out targets about how many individuals need to be persuaded in any given week.

As a side note, it is important to remember that in reality this is not a simply majoritarian process. In reality it is entirely possible for a vocal minority to block even a majority's support for a project. Nonetheless, by pursuing a win number, proponents of development should be able to create a countervailing force of real use not only to bring supporters into the planning consultation process, but in the open battle for public opinion.

Such an approach would allow developers to generally engage with local sentiment above and beyond the noisy voices of single issue protest groups. By bringing a larger number of otherwise less engaged citizens into the discussion, developers can aid the democratic debate around infrastructure and prevent it from being captured by a vocal minority alone. Whilst only dealing with small shares of the overall problem, these innovative solutions nevertheless hold important lessons for bigger developers.

HOUSING: DATA AND CUSTOM BUILD

Data: the homeless charity Shelter should be praised for coming up with one of the first attempts to use this model in Britain. Using data from the Experian consumer information company and adding a small amount of polling data Shelter was able to establish a basic model of individual attitudes to different housing issues across dozens of types of citizen. This has the potential to allow Shelter to tailor its messaging across communities and improve support for its policy agenda.[xxii]

Custom build: one of the points raised at the Fabian roundtables was the potential for applying the custom build sector on a larger scale. Whilst this is not envisaged as a mass solution, experts agreed that the significant interest by citizens in 'actually having some input into how that house is designed could be a way of creating consent around some schemes particularly if you loop that in with the requirement for local people to have a certain share of the plots involved.[xxiii]

Listening and persuading

Normally the way a developer approaches persuasion is to make a big argument about national economic need, a dramatic promise of the boost to the local community (usually in the form of jobs and growth) and a straight cash-based offer to the council and communities alike to diminish opposition in the planning consultation process. If the developer is particularly keen to engage the community, then leaflets or direct mail may be used. As we have seen, however, from HS2 to Balcombe, this approach is highly ineffective. Instead, developers should look to professional organising techniques which when informed by analytics and enacted in partnership with local leaders should yield far better results.

In practical terms, this means hiring organisers and working with a mixture of professional and voluntary activists to educate and persuade individu-

als to support the development project. This can be achieved through a mix of written communication, public meetings and individual or small group conversations. Political science and advertising data both show that the latter is likely to be the most effective.

These conversations could be framed around individuals' hopes and fears not only with regard to the proposed project, but to the community at large. By listening to these hopes and fears and identifying the assuagable grievances and realistic aspirations that individuals have, a community development plan can be offered. This has a good chance of demonstrating positive, practical change, building good will, proving the credibility of promises made and thus earning trust. By so doing developers will have to pass not only a national interest test as to the utility of their project, but a community interest test as to the value of the work proposed thus further tying developers and communities together. Instead of being a matter for yet more formal regulation, such a test relies on genuine emotional engagement and approval from local residents.

A strong example of this approach was brought up in the Fabian transport roundtable in the form of London's Crossrail project. In this operation over 1300 separate community improvement projects were conducted, ranging from tree planting to playground expansion in a bid to win community support. It's important to note that these projects were not tied to any obligation to support Crossrail, but nonetheless had the effect of decreasing the level of opposition to it whilst offering the community genuine improvements to their neighbourhoods.[xxiv]

Critics may question why individuals who are not won round to development projects which promise the golden prizes of jobs and growth might be persuaded by smaller entreaties. These critics should consider the issue of trust. In today's world, citizens have little trust in large institutions, be they public or private. They assume that developers will say anything to get their way, so trust must be earned rather than assumed. The best way to do this is to start small and tangible, with short term deliverables. Once a small skate park has been paid for, local residents will look to the developer with more credibility and trust. They will then listen with less innate hostility to proposals that are bigger and more long-term.

This approach offers citizens agency. This obviously comes in part from shaping the community compensation the developers offer and by being granted personal guarantees of access and oversight. But it also comes by engaging citizens in a genuine dialogue with developers in which the granting of answers by developers to citizens' questions can create a sense of agency on the part of citizens, even if the answer received is not exactly what they had hoped for.

It is important to stress that these listening efforts are more than just passive exercises. In contrast with the formal planning consultation status quo, in which bureaucrats present planning fait accomplis through jargon and simply 'tolerate' listening to citizens views before pushing ahead with their original plans regardless, listening in the future must be about granting actual voice to citizens and communities. A strong measure for judging the true value of voice in this process would be how much genuine agency is granted by developers to communities and individuals. For example, consulting on the scale, location and/or route of projects and altering plans or at least taking the time to respond individually and in detail to concerns and alternatives proposed by citizens is key to demonstrating respect by offer-

ing a genuine attempt to grant agency. This agency could well be extended into the period after construction, for example by granting a community representative on the local board of the developer, so they would know their voice would be listened to even after initial consent has been won. Going further, a truly radical approach proposed by one senior roundtable participant would see development projects' management at the local level directly influenced by community participation, with controls or even break clauses to allow communities to withdraw consent should the developer fail to live up to their obligations.[xxv]

One of the greatest barriers to community consent particularly on issues of energy extraction, are environmental concerns. Interestingly, some of the most creative thinking at the Fabian energy roundtable came from senior corporate figures who suggested that companies in the future should seek to pre-empt rather than allay concerns by "pro-actively adopting the toughest regulation in similar markets and applying it to the market in question". By moving beyond merely following the letter of the law and focusing instead on the advantages to be gained by being a 'best practice player' companies can shift from managing the legal conditions for development to the communities' experience of development.[xxvi] This will play to the advantage of developer and community alike as trust is built, environmental standards are ensured and problems are prevented from occurring in the first place.

As successive development consultations have shown, a common request from residents of the community is to be granted a guaranteed share of the projects benefits. In the case of housing, parents want to know if a proportion of the new homes being built can be guaranteed to their children, whilst in energy, wind farms have guaranteed a free share of local power to the neighbouring community. By taking these actions, developers prove that their project is not just about national infrastructure need, but about genuine community contribution. Thus, individual consent is more meaningfully won and community consent is more lastingly developed.

CHANGE IN PRACTICE: COMMUNITY ENERGY CO-OPS, CUADRILLA IN THE NORTHWEST AND CROYDON TRAMS

Community energy co-operatives

Co-operative energy models provide a successful example of a bottom-up rather then top-down approach to Britain's infrastructure needs. From Cumbria's Baywind to Oxfordshire's Westmill Farm a model of small scale energy generation and shared ownership shows how even often unpopular energy development sites can win greater support. Indeed this is the case internationally with one in three Germans receiving their power via an energy co-operative and 42 million Americans benefiting from the model.

In Leicestershire the community co-operative energy model combined with an offer of integrated infrastructure development to great effect. Indeed this approach enjoyed such marked success that one village backed a development plan that included 310 new homes, new businesses, a community centre and a medical centre with 86 per cent support in a residents survey.

The key lessons of this approach are twofold. First, to share the proceeds of development in terms of access to the resource (in this case, energy) as directly with the community as possible (eg. the mutual model). Second, to embrace inte-

grated development offers which reassure communities that knock-on effects in terms of energy, transport, housing and public services will all be addressed in the development proposed.

Cuadrilla in the northwest

In Lancashire, Cuadrilla has enjoyed a more favourable reputation than in Balcombe. This has been won despite the seismic events of May 2011 where fracturing was responsible for two tremors. There, Cuadrilla has taken the time to grow stronger community links. Frequent meetings with both statutory stakeholders and appearances in front of large and small regional groups are part of this. Additionally, the company has hosted site tours, run science and engineering competitions for young people and have sponsored a local rugby team. Furthermore, when a recent new sites announcement was made company staff were dispatched to the locality to explain the implications in a host of small group community meetings.

From the way the company has consulted on Environmental Impact Assessments, communicates about the benefits and risks, and engaged with local communities, Cuadrilla has now stated its intention to make shale extraction something done with the community, not to the community. The final proof of this post-Balcombe approach will be how Cuadrilla reacts to a situation in which if, for example, after a host of positive initiatives have occurred a locality still rejects extraction plans. Should Cuadrilla prove capable of adapting its approach to local circumstances it will have proven their commitment not just to listen to communities but to act upon what they have heard.

Croydon trams

In the London suburb of Croydon the approach to a tram development project was markedly different from that of most transportation planning efforts. Instead of the traditional top-down imposed route plan with its corresponding upheaval for families and businesses caught in the line, the council and developers worked with the affected local communities on a street by street, property by property basis to win consent. These efforts were creative and varied, including holding school classes on the use of trams in Europe, engaging community groups on the choice of route. In one instance, a pedestrian bridge was redesigned more than half a dozen times in order to win local support.

As London assembly member Val Shawcross said: "We underestimate the creative power our local authorities if they're resourced properly and given the space to do their job." The key to Croydon's success, she concludes, were: "A long period of public debate, a lot of public education and a great deal of community engagement to address the actual concerns of people with action. Very active management of the process combined with lots of listening makes a big difference."

The result was not unanimous consent, but there was a markedly reduced level of opposition as well as greater local support. By listening and then making amendments to their plan based upon the feedback received the project was thus able to succeed.

3 CONCLUSION

Britain's infrastructure needs are extraordinary. In just the decade to come, the coalition's own favoured think-tank Policy Exchange estimates infrastructure needs in just energy, transport, communications and water at 'a conservative estimate' of £434bn.[xxvii] This does not include attendant spending on public services or meeting Shelter's call for 250,000 affordable homes to be built each year at an estimated cost of £12bn per year or £120bn over ten years.[xxviii]

Yet due to a combination of poor political management and a lack of local community consent, major development plans are on the brink of total gridlock. The development establishment's response has been to call for a 'double down' on 'top down', meaning ever more centrally mandated efforts to push through projects regardless of local opinion. When the vexed question of community consent is raised, the only response is ever more generous bribes combined with planning deregulation.

The risk of this approach is that whilst successful in the short term, it may simply compound opposition in the long run, perhaps threatening to endanger the majority of Britain's infrastructure effort. Thus we need a radical alternative to combine the latest in big data with tried and tested methods of community organising, all in the service of winning local support to allow projects to go ahead.

But for this approach to be successful, the ad hoc adoption of smart technology, powerful mathematics and person-to-person persuasion will ultimately prove necessary but not sufficient to the task. Rather these tactics should be adopted in the context of a comprehensive strategy of development project reform which embraces changes to the planning consultation process and the use of company budgets.

Whilst critics will complain that such a radical departure is too costly in terms of time and money, the dispassionate self-interest based riposte is that the front loading of both money and time to build consent first will ultimately prove to be to the project's advantage. What's more, by embracing such an approach, developers can emerge from major infrastructure projects with reputations burnished rather than tarnished by a process that won support and delivered construction.

Critics of this approach have also failed to see that the construction of development projects do not happen in an isolated bubble. Once a development project has been completed, whether it is a power plant, a housing development or a new piece of transport infrastructure, the developer will require an ongoing relationship with that community. Subsequent applications for further planning permission or attempts to attract local workers will be easier if the initial project was not steamrolled through. Furthermore, developers that do this may ruin trust, which will make it harder for other independent projects to win community consent in future.

As an answer to the problem of diminishing party political support for major projects over time, this approach rejects the committee of 'wise men' model. Instead what is proposed is a longer period of consultation to prevent or at least limit the build up in later opposition that often results in the breakdown of cross party infrastructure consensus. However, this alone will be insufficient unless construction times can also be speeded up. The longer a project goes on without yielding its promised benefits, the greater the political risk of a breakdown in bipartisan support and a change of policy. Combined longer consultation times and shorter construction times should yield more realistic, sustained political support than unrealistic expectations of multi-decade bipartisan goodwill.

Critical to the success of this entire approach is a culture change on the part of developers. At the heart of this lies a newfound respect for the role and power of individual citizens in the development process. Rather than viewing citizens as mere unit costs to be bought off with cash and communities as annoying geographical obstructions along a line of development, citizens and communities must become true partners in the whole process. Non-financial compensation to communities as a whole is part of this approach. But the granting of actual voice and agency is even more important.

This report has consistently argued that Britain's infrastructure needs are so vast that there needs to be a new and genuine partnership between the private sector, the state and communities. Such a relationship would be in the developer's self-interest. However, the benefits to citizens, communities and democracy itself are not to be underestimated. For as the great Peruvian economist Hernando Di Soto has noted: "True democracy is more often found not at the ballot box, but in a planning meeting."

ENDNOTES

i   http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/npp/national-population-projections/2010-based-
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ii   http://hs2.org.uk/about-hs2/facts-figures/space-crowded-routes
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xv   http://hbr.org/2008/05/where-is-advertising-going-into-stitials/ar/1
xvi   http://www.thevictorylab.com/ Analytics can have multiple meanings but in
        this context is used in the sense of the campaign tool utilised in US politics and
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xviii   http://www.idiro.com/2013/09/nielsen-report-finds-that-word-of-mouth-is-the-most-
        trusted-source-again/
xix   See both the community organising network the Industrial Areas Foundation http://
        www.industrialareasfoundation.org/content/iaf-leadership-development-training
        and the work of its founder Saul Alinksy http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rules_for_
        Radicals
xx   Fabian roundtable discussion.
xxi   http://www.fabians.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Our_London_WEB.pdf
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THE POLITICS OF REBUILDING BRITAIN

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CONSENT

By Marcus Roberts

Britain's housing, transport and energy needs are dramatic. Yet due to a combination of poor political management and a lack of local of community consent, major infrastructure development plans are on the brink of total gridlock.

Instead of more centrally-determined solutions that rely on either altruism or bribery to achieve community consent for new infrastructure projects, 'The politics of rebuilding Britain' calls for an entirely new approach.

By prioritising engagement with communities from the outset, listening to the needs of local people and gradually earning their trust, this report argues that a new and genuine partnership can be built between the private sector, the state and communities.