



THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH
Social Responsibility & Sustainability

Teaching Student's the Skills to have their voice heard

The smelly corridor



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The Problem

Pathways for students to assert their voice on real-world issues are often invisible outside of university.

23% of young people that didn't vote in 2026 cited they '**didn't know where to start**'

Yet only **9%** felt **politics didn't affect them**

"Young people would like to be taught how to evaluate information and to understand how political systems work"- 2026 Youth Poll (Loose et. al.2026)

The Opportunity

Youth Participatory Action Research can be a framework to develop students voice through teaching.

*"I was very shy and now I'm more open. I'm more **confident in going into the real world** now."- Carla, 19, Student on experience of YPAR (Warren & Marciano, 2018)*

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The 4 Stages of Youth Participatory Action Research

You enable youth to:



50 Minutes Together



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0:00

5 min

Welcome & framing

0:05

10 min

IDENTIFY — Small group debates

0:15

10 min

RESEARCH — Case study + stakeholder matrix

0:25

10 min

ANALYZE — IAP2 spectrum + engagement plan

0:35

10 min

ACT — Scenario role play

0:45

5 min

Debrief & transferability



The climate context is the vehicle. Student voice is the destination

This session isn't about convincing you of a particular position on climate change. It's about giving you and your students tools to find and use their voice in whatever issue matters to them.



Thank you to the Teaching Climate and Sustainability Community of Practice



This workshop was developed by staff and student attendees at January's forum.
Special thanks to student, Fadila Wirawan, for suggesting this focus.

This group is open to all with an interest in teaching for sustainability. Everyone in this room is welcome to join our teams channel today via the QR code.



Workshop Context

Imagine we're all on Edinburgh Future Institute's 'Net Zero Infrastructure' course.

Learning outcomes

On completion of this course, the student will be able to:

1. Demonstrate a critical understanding of the net-zero and low-carbon targets and boundary conditions which are suggested by policy and key industry bodies.
2. Apply critical analysis of data-driven solutions based on existing solutions and case studies, as well as those suitable of the scale and complexity often encountered in cities and smaller communities.
3. Critically review proposals by government bodies and infrastructure providers towards a low-carbon approach in cities and smaller communities.
4. Develop skills to present and argue the design and specification of low-carbon solutions that have an impact on net-zero targets and aspirations.
5. Demonstrate some originality and creativity in dealing with professional issues that address net-zero policy through a socio-economic and technical approach.



Form an Opinion Through Debate

Using open debate amongst peers encourage students to form an outcome-based opinion on an issue that affects them, identify other stakeholders and challenge them to identify others diverse opinions on the matter.

Debate Topic:

"Would you support the introduction of car-free cities in Scotland for emission reduction?"

How

Groups of 4–5
Assigned position (for / against / undecided)
3 min prep · 5 min debate · 2 min open floor

Key Questions

Who else is affected?
What is their primary concern?
How might their view differ from yours?

Then...

Role-play OTHER stakeholders:
Delivery drivers · Elderly residents · Rural commuters



Understand Power Dynamics

Evaluate case studies of similar desired change in other contexts to understand power dynamics around an issue.

Case Study

Amsterdam's Autoluw Project

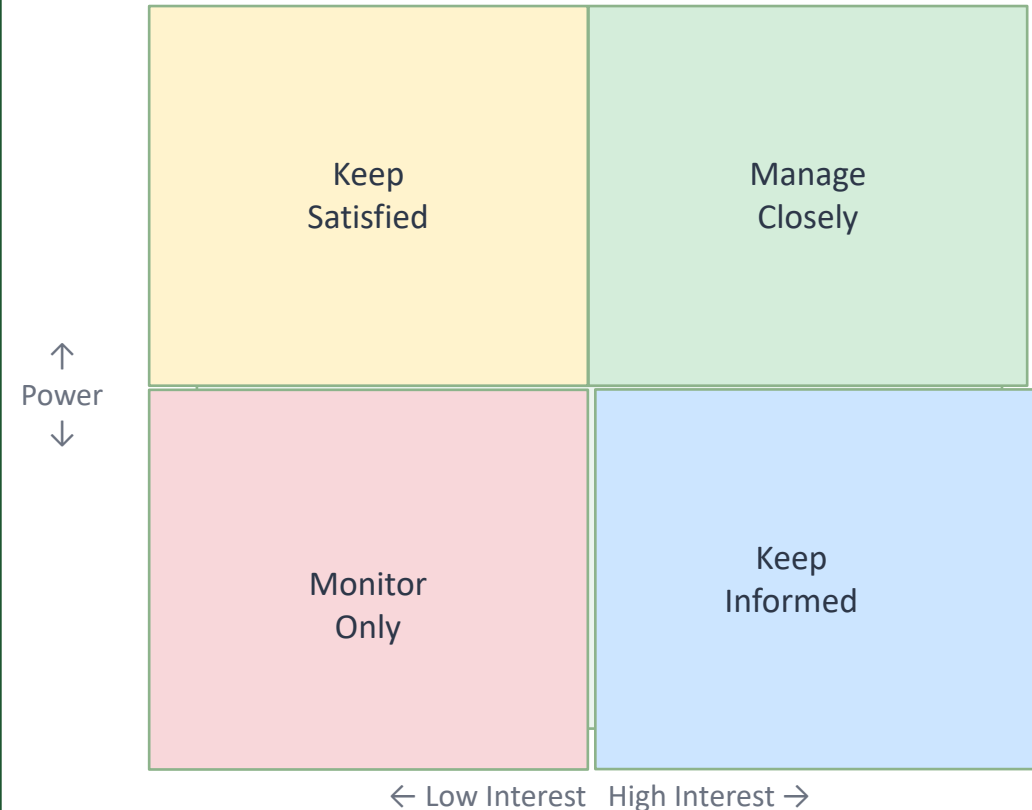
What: Car reduction in residential neighbourhoods

Who resisted: Businesses, some residents

Who championed: Cycling groups, families, environmental NGOs

Outcome: 30% reduction in car traffic in pilot areas

Output: Stakeholder Power-Interest Matrix

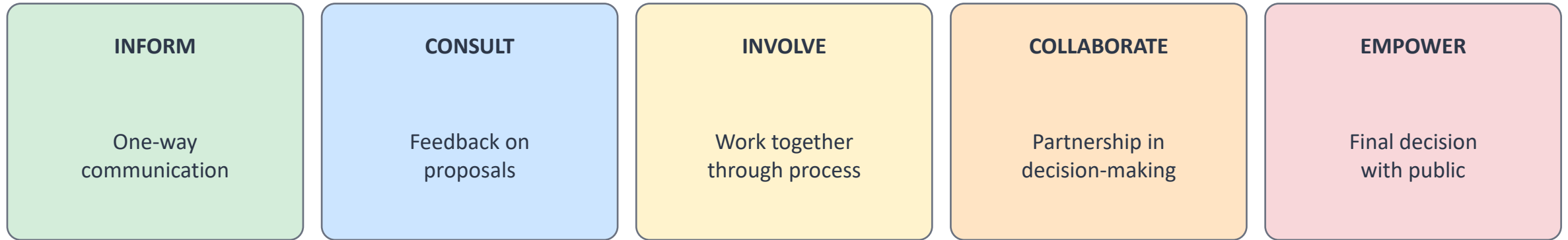




Plan Stakeholder Engagement

Identify stakeholder engagement plan and choose best method available to deliver message for own stakeholder group.

IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation



Increasing level of public participation →

Your Task (group work · 5 min)

Assume the role of a **project manager** for the car-free city initiative.

Pick ONE stakeholder category from your matrix.

Design an engagement approach — which IAP2 level fits? What mechanism would you use?

Example: As city residents → Consult via survey, townhall meetings, written consultation



Deliver Your Opinion

Communicate opinion persuasively through chosen feedback mechanism

Scenario: Edinburgh is consulting on a major city centre transformation — reducing car access, expanding cycling, reshaping public space. You are a city resident.

Option A

Survey Response

Complete a structured written survey on the proposals.
Focus: clear, concise, evidence-based answers.

Option B

Written Consultation

Draft a short formal consultation submission.
Focus: structured argument, stakeholder voice.

Option C

Mock Public Meeting

Prepare a 60-second verbal statement.
Focus: persuasive delivery, clear position.



Any reflections?

*If you're not getting heard,
move up the power matrix.
Or check your speaking to the right person.
Things might still not go your way.*